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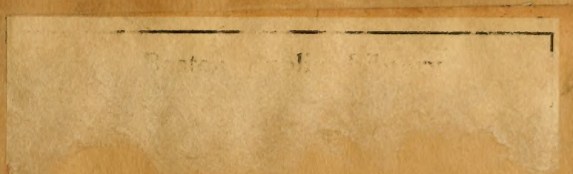
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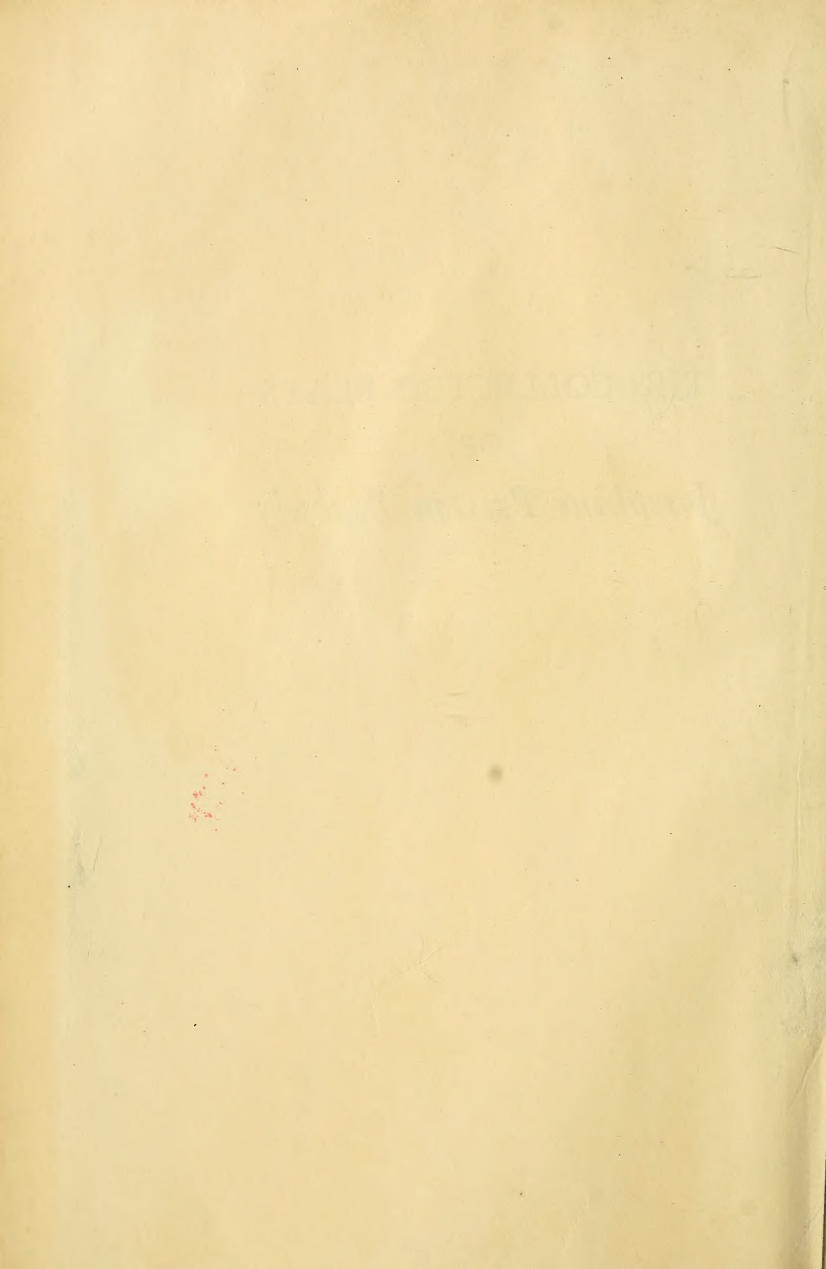


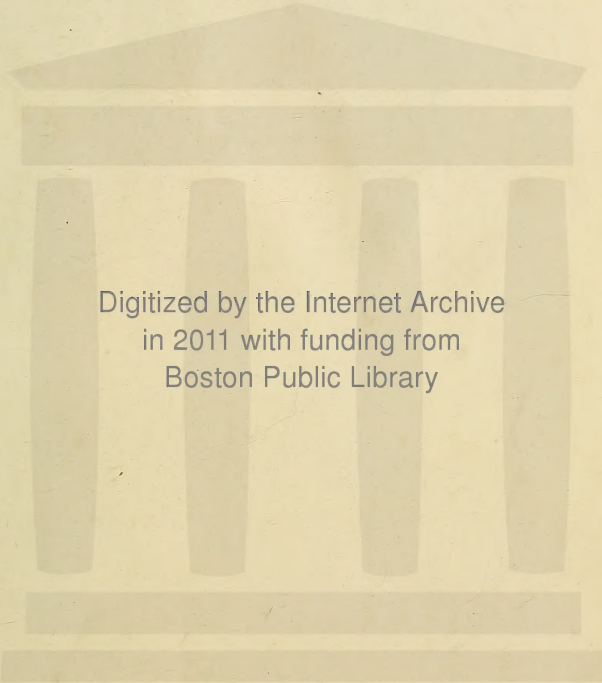
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THE COLLECTED PLAYS
OF
Josephine Preston Peabody





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Josephine Preston Peabody.

THE COLLECTED PLAYS
OF
Josephine Preston Peabody
(Mrs. Lionel S. Marks)

WITH A FOREWORD BY
GEORGE P. BAKER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

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THE COLLECTED PLAYS
Josephine Preston Peabody

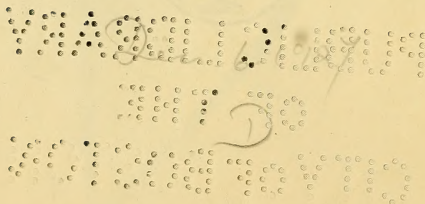
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CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| FOREWORD BY GEORGE P. BAKER | vii |
| FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES | i |
| MARLOWE | 57 |
| THE WINGS | 213 |
| THE PIPER | 247 |
| THE WOLF OF GUBBIO | 443 |
| PORTRAIT OF MRS. W.... | 635 |

FOREWORD

JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY, writing in 1898, at the age of twenty-four, an account of her life, said, 'And like everybody else, I want to write plays.' Three years later, in 1901, she cried, 'Oh, if I could only have a hand in the tug at the Drama in America! If I could only pull and haul and boost and kick and push — and hear one responsive onward squeak!' With her this desire to write plays was far more than the craving for free emotional expression which attracts thousands of young people to this form. Nor was the attraction for her the sense of god-like power in making men and women move and speak at the author's will — what has often run away with the imagination of youths who say that they want to be dramatists. Read her letters and note the comfort Josephine Peabody found, when hard beset by circumstance, in dramatizing herself and any of the small events of daily life. Above all, to her, Drama meant beauty of thought and word, meant the sublimation of the commonplace, and the revealing to others of beauty where most people pass it by

unnoted. The tradition she admired and which she made her own was the tradition of Shakespeare and the best English romanticism. Of course, she cared deeply for the Elizabethan dramatists because she could enter into their work with complete understanding. Shakespeare she read and re-read. 'Oh,' she cried once, 'this man Shakespeare — one cannot get away from him!' Her father and mother not only taught her to read Shakespeare, but talked often before her of performances of his plays which they had seen and admired. As she grew, she read widely, but it was not so much the reading for which she cared as the stimulation which that reading gave to the play of her imagination. 'I did not really love to read poetry at an early age; I thought I did — I would start in a poem and from that beatific window my spirit flew out.' Shakespeare and the Bible were her two most constant inspirations. Of our later poets, she loved particularly Keats, Shelley, Browning, and Blake. In Blake, as her diaries show, she felt a kindred spirit. Supported, stimulated by such reading, she grew more and more to transmute by her imagination the drab and the commonplace of her youthful days into beautiful similes and thoughts.

With this strong impulse toward dramatic writing, with this natural turning toward the romantic, and this repeated contact with romantic literature, she was living in a period the mood of which was far unlike her own. It was a time of intellectual gropings toward a better understanding of life as seen with the aid of science, a time of half understood adjustments. Above all, it was a transitional period. On the one hand, Andrew Lang, Austin Dobson, and a host of others succeeding Praed, wrote exquisite experiments in old French and other foreign forms — poems in which too often the form was far more important than the content. Even in Swinburne the sheer beauty of the collocation of words seemed at times offered in place of significant meaning. Tennyson, the poet of the hour, was also the last of the great closet dramatists writing in the Elizabethan manner. On the other hand, contemporaneously with Josephine Peabody's younger life, the Drama was making its first real contacts with science, was beginning to reflect life as readjusted in the light of scientific discovery and the formulation of its results which marked the mid-nineteenth century. Ardent spirits, finding realism insufficient and confusing, even preached naturalism. For

a time it seemed as if realism and its offshoots would sweep away utterly all romanticism. Yet even as, the world over, scientific realism seemed carrying everything before it, here and there romanticism raised its head in a protest of sheer beauty against the morbidity, the seeming complete unimaginativeness of current realism. On the Continent, Verhaeren, Maeterlinck, and Rostand were such protestants. In our own country, William Vaughn Moody, Percy MacKaye, and Josephine Peabody expressed the same protest against submerging beauty in photographic fact.

What most interested Josephine Peabody in life was the atmosphere surrounding a circumstance of a character, the effect on her of a happening or of a meeting with some one, of a landscape, for hers was the soul of the lyric poet for whom the perfect phrasing of the personal mood is of prime importance. Read her diaries and this will not need proof. Yet always the dramatist in her longed to speak so that all might feel and understand as clearly as she the mood, the emotion which was hers, or which she sympathetically described in the characters of her plays. (Early she wrote:

I longed to speak a common tongue,
To set this reed
Unto the voice of Everyday
With its familiar yea and nay,
Unto the common heart and need.

Always one may trace in her diaries an inevitable struggle as she tries to translate into terms clear for the thousands and thousands who must make up the audience of any successful playwright, all that her unusual and exquisite response to beauty, her delight in just those subtle sensations hardest to make clear to others, had given her. From start to finish in her playwriting, hers was the struggle of the richly endowed dramatic poet, striving to become a poetic dramatist. First, last, and always, she craved beauty of feeling, thought, and form. As her biographer has said, 'Everything close to her must be beautiful. Since poverty forbade fashion, then beauty must be expressed by individuality in dress. If outside joys were limited, then every day, as well as holiday and Saint's day, must bring symbolic beauty and rejoicing into daily routine. Memorable was the charm of her handwriting, deliberately changed from the conventional school calligraphy into curves of beauty, and the placing of words upon paper

with such instinct for design that the mere aspect of the page delights.’¹ A dramatist certainly she would be, but whether she consciously willed it or not, hers must be a Drama of as great beauty as she could give it in central thought, in design, in word, and in sculptured phrase. ‘There is one thing very plain. The only thing in the world that makes me feel rich is to spend myself richly in the effort to share beauty.’ Early she was accused of some obscurity. If she ever deserved this, it was not because she did not understand her own moods perfectly. Listen to this phrasing of something that most men and women would not have felt, or feeling would have been totally unable to phrase intelligibly. ‘Even now — every day almost, I live over again that moment, last winter, in the moonlit dark and stillness, when a moth flew against my face — and the infinite thought of infinity — unmeasured life and beauty — came to me with strange undying pain, the pang of a central happiness, the very white heat of understanding. I think, too, of the frenzy that possessed me — those clear, perfect mornings,

¹ *The Diary and Letters of Josephine Preston Peabody*. Selected and edited by Christina Hopkinson Baker. Houghton Mifflin Company.

when the sky was pitilessly blue and the long moss stirred in the winds and the thousand-voiced grass seemed a-thrill with crickets and the water was full of stars a-dance.' To word values, their sounds separately and collectively, she was so imaginatively sensitive that often phrases which for her completely crystallized a meaning remain opaque for less imaginative readers. 'I asked them if they had ever noticed the suggestion of shape form in these sound combinations. . . . They had not, so I told them, as I am much interested in it — about first seeing it in these words of Rossetti's — "Slim-curved lute." They so perfectly expressed the shape of a lute — the *im* sound being flat and straight (for the neck), the outward curve of the *ur*, the inward curve *u*. It sounds fantastic, but it is true. To me the short vowel sounds are straight.'

Naturally, with all this feeling for beauty, this sensitiveness to mood, this enthralling pleasure in words, she turned first, in working out her fate as a dramatist, to the Elizabethans, and above all to Shakespeare. 'Fortune and Men's Eyes' is written out of the very fullness of her thinking and dreaming in regard to the human tragedy many feel lies back of Shakespeare's

sonnets. It is significant, however, that she chose for her play not the whole rich and varied drama of the relations of *The Dark Lady*, *Pembroke*, and *Shakespeare*, but the moment which seemed to her best to reveal the ultimate effect on the man *Shakespeare*. It is not dramatic action which is of prime consequence for her, but a state or states of mind — subtle, not easy for every one who reads to understand. ‘*Fortune and Men’s Eyes*’ is a play written by one whose mind is stored with every detail of this legend of *Shakespeare* for the enjoyment of minds similarly stored. Without such knowledge many a reference, many an allusion rich in beauty and suggestion for the minds so stored, may pass unheeded or may even be confusing. To him who does not know the sonnets intimately, what will *Shakespeare’s* citing, at perhaps the most critical moment in the play, the words ‘Fair, kind, and true’ signify? By her own statement, she cared most for the soliloquy beginning with this phrase and that with which the play concludes, both passages revealing a state of mind so complicated, so subtle, as to demand treatment by soliloquy. Yet more and more the modern auditor was banning soliloquy.

In the play there is much sympathetic under-

standing of the central figure, the Player, Shakespeare. Broadly speaking, there is, too, good handling of the Dark Lady. Else, the figures move to and fro as types or background. Of her earlier characterizations she confessed: 'I am inclined by nature to want to see all my people very clearly at the start and then just let their relations develop without forcing a single event. And a playwright mustn't be a Quietist certainly. 'Tis funny. I did not know I possessed the smallest kind of individual theory about the drama as a whole, till I ran up against this natural impulse and wish — wish — wish. It's a hateful thing that one should have to fill up the outlines with physical incident; and yet, bodies must have something to do: and as soon as I say to myself any great actor's name and slip him into the part of my man in the play, I feel the almost hopeless absurdity of trying to give him anything adequate to Do; anything that a man would *want* to do: for I know so hopelessly little about live men, real men.' In 'Fortune and Men's Eyes,' for all its charm and understanding, the dramatist writes more as an Elizabethan for the cultivated few, for lovers of Shakespeare's sonnets, than for the vast numbers which make the widespread audience of the public theatre.

There was, however, in 'Marlowe,' swift growth over difficulties. It was, nevertheless, planned more by a poet than an instinctive dramatist. Its central purpose the poet has stated clearly: 'I wanted to work this queer play up to the discovery (to Marlowe, and perhaps to a part of an audience) of a true passion, albeit a spiritual passion, that might last and does illumine, even if it only puzzles the poor soul with new light and with the bare sham and selfishness of his own past. That I tried to do in Act IV; and it still reads, to my partial ear and mind, up to a true climax, in spite of its quiet method.' Working to embody this dramatically, its author so loves the background, the surrounding mood, that she settles slowly to the direct onward movement necessary, making forays in this and that direction in Acts I and II, all of them charming but not all of them necessary in such detail in the development of the central purpose. Act III is to the present writer probably the best presentation which exists of Marlowe's mind at a time of supreme self-torment, but it is never likely to be popular with large audiences. This third act is a long dialogue, very beautiful, very subtly allusive, between Christopher Marlowe and

Thomas Lodge. There is little dramatic action in the ordinarily accepted sense, though there is profound emotion. Lodge is but slightly characterized, and there is none of the time-honored clash expected between two characters when a dramatist faces the need of setting forth in one or both subtly elusive moods. Instead, there is a long act of the most delicate and, I believe, perfect understanding of Marlowe's mind, phrased in lines often of exquisite beauty. Here in this play Josephine Peabody set the exacting standards which have always made her plays difficult to produce. They demand the utmost in sympathetic understanding from producer and actor. They demand the power in the actor of making sheer emotion satisfactorily replace for an audience expected dramatic action. They demand from an audience quick responsiveness to subtle values and beauties of word and phrase. Always the actors in her plays must possess a skill in reading verse which our actors in the past quarter-century have shown less and less as they have been no longer expected to speak frequently the lines of Shakespeare or other poetic dramatists. Even, too, as our young actors have not learned the art of speaking the lines of Shakespeare pro-

perly, our hearers have grown more and more impatient of the beauties of Shakespeare's tight-knit phrase. Yet the fourth act of Marlowe is proof sufficient that had health and a longer life been granted the dramatist, she would have conquered the form she so desired to master. The act, set in beauty, moves with beauty through varied drama to its moving climax. Always when acted it grips and delights an audience. The stark last act is, in its swiftness, like the very blow that killed Marlowe. Advance and great advance there is in this play, but even yet the fusing of parts, each in itself admirable, had not quite taken place.

Such fusing comes in ('The Piper,' undoubtedly the best known and best liked of Josephine Peabody's plays. It was a triumph in England after it won the Stratford-on-Avon prize. 'As to the Stratford-on-Avon performances, the decent cables on the 27th of July were only hasty messages, and even their "tremendous reception" gave one no idea of the true Paderewski-recital uproar that gladdened the worn spirits of L. S. M. and me after our battering summer (and the fearful collision with the untoward death of Edward VII and postponement of the Great Day — a catastrophe impossible to make good).

‘I had lived through harrowing weeks and months, helping to pluck the Play — on a fighting chance — out of the teeth of utter destruction; and to my own mind, though not to the audience’s, the way they acted (and FORGOT) Act III had made me feel that evening like something being slowly *roasted* at the stake. But they had done the first act *splendidly* (made the house rise and roar when the children ran out); — and they pulled up again through the speed and spirit of the good Bensonian company on the fourth act; and it *was* an “Ovation” if ever such a thing has been seen.

‘I had to receive a long ceremonial speech, you know, along with the little silver casket, and mounds of flowers; so after the end of the play, and the actors’ many curtain calls, and prolonged uproar for the author, I stole out — and I was “arranged” (the curtain being down) in the centre of the stage, with the Governors, the Mayor and Vicar of Stratford, and the whole company, children and all — backing me — in Hamelin market-place.

‘Then the curtain rose upon us; and the speech began. I had dreaded it as the last torture to be wreaked upon a jaded mind and body (before that evening). And it was trying enough.

But the waves of good-will and human delight that swept to sustain me, over those footlights, were something beautiful and undreamed of. They made me feel like a very happy Child. And when, having the little casket placed in my hands, I had to make some reply, I must say I felt it a relief, a quietness and a deep *delight* to come down and say my say. And you may be sure that all my dearest friends were in my mind — like an arras full of faces — and the old days when the Sonnets of Wm. S. were a mascot. And there was I — “dressed like a bride” and looking straight through the wall of that theatre, with my inner eye, upon the Warwickshire evening outside, and *close* by — at the turn of the river — the spire of the dearest church in the world.’

Here in America ‘The Piper’ was greatly liked. It would have been played professionally the country over had not child labor laws in certain States prohibited the absolutely necessary use of many young children. However, to-day, the play is given very frequently by amateurs under conditions to which child labor laws do not apply.

To the present writer, however, it is doubtful whether in beauty of feeling, in the conquering

of technical difficulties, 'The Piper' is superior to 'The Wolf of Gubbio.' Undoubtedly its subject gives it wider appeal than the whimsical and gently ironic treatment of the legend of the Wolf. Yet, were the professional theatre in this country able to do what the professional theatre of the Continent often did before the War — present with skilled, imaginative producers and equally responsive actors poetic plays of decided worth — I am sure 'The Wolf of Gubbio' would have revealed its beauty to a surprisingly large public. Given in this country only by amateurs and under the severely limiting conditions of the stages of small theatres, it has never had the chance it deserves.

What was going on in this sequence of plays is deeply interesting. For many years, Josephine Peabody turned always from the present and its demand for realistic treatment to the historic past, as in 'Fortune and Men's Eyes,' 'The Wings,' and 'Marlowe,' or to legend, as in 'The Piper' and 'The Wolf of Gubbio.' As she worked, she tempered all of her poetic gifts to better and better dramatic use in the form she steadily grew more to understand. Her arch-enemy, over-subtlety and a readiness to believe that what was perfectly clear to her must be

equally clear to others, and therefore could be conveyed in allusive phrase, she was slowly conquering. Whimsically and humorously she recognized early her over-fondness for subtlety. 'Wrote a thing called "Horizon" — was much impressed by the subtlety of the idea and did my best to work it out. Am now convinced that the idea is successfully subtle; it would be apparent to no one, saving myself, with a telescope.' Early, too, she had recognized that 'my deepest happiness and deepest sorrows have been dreams.' Scrutinizing herself and her work, she concluded: 'I do believe that I must combat this tendency to be what people call "obscure" if I ever wish to be read. How (the poems) are obscure I don't see: the language is certainly simple — the thought is the thought and cannot be changed for another. One must, then, think thoughts that have more common vital interest.' And she determined that 'if it is going to make my voice a far-away sound, if it is going to throw me upon my far-off dream resources, so that I shall seem an incomprehensible thing — I will dig, break stone, sweep streets, before I give myself up to it for life.' She came to understand that for advance in her art, she must 'come outside' herself. More and more she was

learning to do this, and she became able to present the subtleties her sensitive soul felt so as to make them comprehensible to a larger and larger public.

To make possible this change and to fortify it had come, not more of what had been in her girlhood sufficiently her portion — anxiety and grief as interpreters of life — but the deepening and the strengthening of her insight by a happy married life and a passionate devotion to her children. With 'The Wolf of Gubbio' she was passing from the experimenter in the dramatic to the assured worker. In her last play, for the first time, she turned to a past so near that, however poetic the presentation and the thought, the characters must live like men and women of to-day. She was passing from romanticism to, at least, relative realism. It was a keen disappointment to her that her 'Portrait of Mrs. W.' (Mary Wollstonecraft) was not warmly received. This was not her fault. She had worked, with as passionate love of her art as ever, with all the painstaking care which shows in the constant revisions in her own copies of her plays. Always hers was a 'counsel of perfection.' But the tragedy in her own life was as great as that of which she wrote. Even as she came to grips

with her chosen subject, fatal illness was sapping her vitality, corroding her powers. Yet even to the end her most persistent mood was that which she had phrased some twenty years before: 'And for the sense of love that passes understanding in the daily companionship of an unnamable ideal, ever since I was a little child — for the happiness of having lived about the temple as a little child and listening at night — while yet I did not know whether I heard God speaking or Eli — I am blessed and happy. I envy no man. And I pray that I may never know envy for more than one moment. To share that blessedness, to share it, to share it! To give away understanding and to earn more.'

Hers, then, was not the work to blaze a new path in our Drama, but, keeping alive the best standards of sheer sensitiveness and beauty in the Drama, to be one of the protestants — but with no self-consciousness or self-advertising — against the harsh realism of her youth. As the years passed, her path converged to meet that of the realists who were beginning, like Eugene O'Neill, to see behind the man and his mistakes, errors, and gropings, the eternal verities and beauties. Hers was in no sense a fulfilled career as a dramatist. Rather, as she grew in power

and richness of result with each play till her last, she passed from the somewhat imitative romantic and dramatic poet to a poetic dramatist on legendary themes so treated that theirs was a romanticism of their own rather than of an earlier day. And just as she began to discern what would have securely related her to the best of the newer dramatists, — the poetic, the romantic, the spiritually significant and uplifting in the life of the common human, — illness struck her pen from her hand. Watching her career, one recalls the words of her own beloved Marlowe:

‘Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight
And burnèd is Apollo’s laurel bough.’

GEORGE P. BAKER

August 31, 1927

FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES

A Drama in One Act

*'When in disgrace with Fortune and men's
eyes.' . . .*

SONNET XXIX

(Published in 1900)

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM HERBERT, *Son of the Earl of Pembroke*

SIMEON DYER, *A Puritan*

TOBIAS, *Host of 'The Bear and The Angel'*

WAT BURROW, *A bear-ward*

DICKON, *A little boy, son of Tobias*

CHIFFIN, *A ballad-monger*

A PRENTICE

A PLAYER, *Master Wm. Shakespeare of the Lord
Chamberlain's Company*

MISTRESS MARY FYTTON, *A maid-of-honor to Queen
Elizabeth*

MISTRESS ANNIE HUGHES, *Also of the Court*

TAVERNERS and PRENTICES

TIME: — *An autumn afternoon in the year 1599 A.D.*

PLACE: — *South London*



Fortune and Men's Eyes

SCENE: Interior of 'The Bear and the Angel,' South London. At back, the centre entrance gives on a short alley-walk which joins the street beyond at a right angle. To right and left of this doorway, casements. Front, to the right, a door opening upon the inn-garden; a second door on the right, towards the back, leading to a tap-room. Opposite this, left, a door leading into a buttery. Left, opposite the garden-door, a large chimney-piece with a smouldering wood-fire. A few seats; a lantern (unlighted) in a corner. In the foreground, to the right, a long and narrow table with several mugs of ale upon it, also a lute.

At one end of the table WAT BURROW is finishing his ale and holding forth to the PRENTICE (who thrums the lute) and a group

of taverners, some smoking. At the farther end of the table SIMEON DYER observes all with grave curiosity. TOBIAS and DICKON draw near. General noise.

Prentice (singing)

*What do I give for the Pope and his riches!
I's my ale and my Sunday breeches;
I's an old master, I's a young lass,
And we'll eat green goose, come Martinmas!
Sing Rowdy Dowdy,
Look ye don't crowd me:
I's a good club,*

— So let me pass!

Dickon

Again! again!

Prentice

Sing Rowdy —

Wat (finishing his beer)

Swallow it down.

*Sling all such froth and follow me to the Bear!
They stay for me, lined up to see us pass
From end to end o' the alley. Ho! You doubt?
From Lambeth to the Bridge!*

Prentices

'Tis so; ay.

Taverners

Come, follow! Come.

Wat

Greg's stuck his ears
With nosegays, and his chain is wound about
Like any May-pole. What? I tell ye, boys,
Ye have seen no such bear, a Bear o' Bears,
Fit to bite off the prophet, in the show,
With seventy such boys.

(*Pulling Dickon's ear*) Bears, say you, bears?
Why, Rursus Major, as your scholars tell,
A royal bear, the greatest in his day,
The sport of Alexander, unto Nick —
Was a ewe-lamb dyed black; no worse, no worse!
To-morrow come and see him with the dogs;
He'll not give way, — not he!

Dickon

To-morrow's Thursday!
To-morrow's Thursday!

Prentice

Will ye lead by here?

Tobias

Ay, that would be a sight. Wat, man, this way!

Wat

Ho, would you squinch us? Why, there be a
press

O' gentry by this tide to measure Nick
And lay their wagers, at a blink of him,
Against to-morrow! Why, the stairs be full.

To-morrow you shall see the Bridge a-creak,
 The river — dry with barges, — London gape,
 Gape! While the Borough buzzes like a hive
 With all their worships! Sirs, the fame o' Nick
 Has so pluckt out the gentry by the sleeve,
 'Tis said the Queen would see him.

Tobias

Ay, 'tis grand.

Dickon

O-oh, the Queen?

Prentice

How now? What man art thou to lead a bear,
 Forgetting both his quality and hers!
 Drink all; drink to the Queen.

Tobias

Ay, now.

Wat

To her! —

You, boy, put by this saying with your pint:
 'The Queen, her high and glorious majesty!'

Simeon (gravely)

Long live the Queen!

Wat

Maker of golden laws
 For baitings! She that cherishes the Borough
 And shines upon our pastimes. By the mass!
 Thank her for the crowd to-morrow. But for her,

We were a homesick handful of brave souls
That love the royal sport. These mouthing
players,

These hookers, would 'a' spoiled us of our beer —

Prentice

Lying by to catch the gentry at the stairs, —
All pressing towards Bear Alley —

Wat

To run 'em in

At stage-plays and show-fooleries on the way;
Stage-plays, with their tart-nonsense and their
flags,

Their 'Tamerlanes' and 'Humors' and what not!

My life on't, there was not a man of us

But fared his Lent, by reason of their fatness,

And on a holiday ate not at all!

Tobias (solemnly)

'Tis so; 'tis so.

Wat

But when she heard it told

How lean our sport was grown, she damns stage-
plays

O' Thursday. So: Nick gets his turn to growl!

Prentice

As well as any player.

*[With a dumb show of ranting among the
taverners]*

Wat

Players? — Hang them!

I know 'em, I. I've been with 'em. . . . I was
As sweet a gentlewoman, in my voice,
As any of your finches that sings small.

Tobias

'Twas high.

Enter The Player followed by Chiffin, the ballad-monger. He looks worn and tired.

Wat (lingering at the table)

I say, I've played.

. . . There's not one man

Of all the gang — save one . . . Ay, there be one
I grant you, now! . . . He used me in right sort;
A man worth better trades.

[*Seeing The Player*

— Lord love you, sir!

Why, this is you indeed. 'Tis a long day, sir,
Since I clapped eyes on you. But even now
Your name was on my tongue, as pat as ale!
You see me off. We bait to-morrow, sir;
Will you come see? Nick's fresh, and every soul
As hot to see the fight as 'twere to be —
Man Daniel, baited with the lions!

Tobias

Sir,

'Tis high . . . 'tis high.

Wat

We show him in the street
With dogs and all, ay, now, if you will see.

The Player

Why, so I will. A show and I not there?
Bear it out bravely, Wat. High fortune, man!
Commend me to thy bear.

[Drinks and passes him the cup]

Wat

Lord love you, sir!

'Twas ever so you gave a man godspeed. . . .
And yet your spirits flag; you look but palely.
I'll take your kindness, thank ye.

(Turning away.)

In good time!

Come after me and Nick, now. Follow all;
Come boys, come, pack!

[Exit Wat, still descanting. Exeunt most of the taverners, with the Prentice. Simeon Dyer draws near The Player, regarding him gravely. Chiffin sells ballads to those who go out. Dickon is about to follow them, when Tobias holds him by the ear.]

Tobias

What? Not so fast, you there!
Who gave you holiday? Bide by the inn; —
Tend on our gentry. *[Exit after the crowd.]*

Chiffin

Ballads, gentlemen?

Ballads, new ballads?

Simeon (to The Player)

With your pardon sir,

I am gratified to note your abstinence
From this deplorable fond merriment
Of baiting of a bear.

The Player

Your friendship then,

Takes pleasure in the heaviness of my legs.

Save I am weary, I would see the bear.

Nay, rest you happy; malt shall comfort
us.

Simeon

You do mistake me. I am —

Chiffin

Ballad, sir?

‘How a Young Spark would Woo a Tanner’s
Wife,

And She Sings Sweet in Turn.’

Simeon (indignant)

Abandoned poet!

Chiffin (indignant)

I’m no such thing! —

An honest ballad, sir,

No poetry at all.

The Player

Good, sell thy wares.

Chiffin

'A Ballad of a Virtuous Country-Maid
Forswears the Follies of the Flaunting Town' —
And tends her geese all day, and weds a vicar.

Simeon

A godlier tale, in sooth. But speak, my man;
If she be virtuous, and the tale a true one,
Can she not do't in prose?

The Player

Beseech her, man.

'Tis scandal she should use a measure so.
For no more sin than dealing out false measure
Was Dame Sapphira slain.

Simeon

You are with me, sir;
Although methinks you do mistake the sense
O' that you have read. . . . This jigging, jog-
trot rime,
This ring-me-round, debaseth mind and matter,
To make the reason giddy —

Chiffin (to The Player)

Ballad, sir?

'Hear All!' A fine brave ballad of a Fish
Just caught off Dover; nay, a one-eyed fish,
With teeth in double rows!

The Player

Nay, nay, go to.

Chiffin

'My Fortune's Folly,' then; or 'The True Tale
Of an Angry Gull'; or 'Cherries Like Me
Best.'

'Black Sheep, or How a Cut-Purse Robbed His
Mother';

'The Prentice and the Dell!' ... 'Plays Play
not Fair,'

Or how a *gentlewoman's* heart was took

By a player, that was king in a stage-play....

'The Merry Salutation,' — 'How a Spark
Would Woo a Tanner's Wife!' — 'The Direful
Fish' —

Cock's passion, sir! not buy a cleanly ballad
Of the great fish, late ta'en off Dover coast,
Having two heads and teeth in double rows?
Salt fish caught in fresh water? ...

'Od's my life!

What if, or salt or fresh? A prodigy!

A ballad like 'Hear All!' — And me and mine,
Five children and a wife would bait the devil,
May lap the water out o' Lambeth Marsh
Before he'll buy a ballad! My poor wife,
That lies a-weeping for a tansy-cake!
Body o' me, shall I smack ale again?

The Player

Why, here's persuasion; logic, arguments.
Nay, not the ballad. Read for thine own joy.
I doubt not but it stretches, honest length,
From Maid Lane to the Bridge and so across.
But for thy length of thirst —
(*Giving him a coin*) That touches near.

Chaffin (apart)

A vagrom player, would not buy a tale
O' the Great Fish with the twy rows o' teeth!
Learn you to read! [Exit

Simeon

Thou seemest, sir, from that I have overheard,
A man, as one should grant, beyond thy call-
ing. . . .

I would I might assure thee of the way,
To urge thee quit this painted infamy.
There may be time, seeing thou art still young,
To pluck thee from the burning. How are ye
'stroyed,

Ye foolish grasshoppers! Cut off, forgotten,
When moth and rust corrupt your flaunting
shows,

The Earth shall have no memory of your
name!

Dickon

Pray you, what's yours?

Simeon

I am called Simeon Dyer.

[There is the sudden uproar of a crowd in the distance. It continues at intervals for some time.]

Prentices

Hey, lads?

Some noise beyond: Come, cudgels, come!

Come on, come on, I'm for it.

[Exeunt all but The Player, Simeon, and Dickon]

Simeon

Something untoward, without: or is it rather

The tumult of some uproar incident

To this vicinity?

The Player

It is an uproar

Most incident to bears.

Dickon

I would I knew!

The Player (holding him off at arm's length)

Hey boy? We would have tidings of the bear:

Go thou, I'll be thy surety. Mark him well.

Omit no fact; I would have all of it:

What manner o' bear he is, — how bears himself;

Number and pattern of ears, and eyes what hue;

His voice and fashion o' coat. Nay, come not
back,

Till thou hast all. Skip, sirrah!

[*Exit* Dickon

Simeon

Think, fair sir.

Take this new word of mine to be a seed
Of thought in that neglected garden-plot,
Thy mind, thy worthier part. Nay, think!

The Player

Why, so;

Thou hast some right, friend; now and then it
serves.

Sometimes I have thought, and even now, some-
times,

... I think.

Simeon (benevolently)

Heaven ripen thought unto an harvest! [*Exit*

[*The Player alone, rises, stretches his arms,
and paces the floor wearily*

The Player

Some quiet now. . . . Why should I thirst for it,

Alone with the one man of all living men

I have least cause to honor. . . . She is too false —

At last, to keep a spaniel's loyalty.

I do believe it. And by my own soul,

She shall not have me, what remains of me

That may be beaten back into the ranks.
I will not look upon her. . . . Bitter Sweet.
This fever that torments me day by day —
Call it not love — this servitude, this spell
That haunts me like a sick man's fantasy,
With pleading of her eyes, her voice, her eyes —
It shall not have me. I am too much stained:
But, God or no God, yet I do not live
And have to bear my own soul company,
To have it stoop so low. She looks on Her-
bert.

Oh, I have seen! But he, — he must withstand
her!

For my sake, yes, for my sake! — I'll not doubt
His honor; nor the love he hath to me; —
As Jonathan to David. — I'll not doubt.
He knows what I have suffered, — suffer still —
Although I love her not. Her ways, her ways.
It is her ways that eat into the heart
With beauty more than Beauty; and her voice,
That silvers o'er the meaning of her speech
Like moonshine on black waters. Ah, un-
coil! . . .

He's the sure morning after this dark dream;
Wide daylight and west wind of a lad's love;
With all his golden pride, for my dull hours,
Still climbing sunward. Sink all loves in him!

And cleanse me of this cursèd, fell distrust
That marks the pestilence. '*Fair, kind, and
true.*'

Lad, lad. How could I turn from friendliness
To worship such false gods? . . .

'Fair, kind, and true.' And yet, if She were
true, —

To me, though false to all things else; — one
truth,

So one truth lived —. One truth! O beggared
soul,

— Foul Lazarus, so starved it can make shift
To feed on crumbs of honor! — Am I this?

[*Enter Anne Hughes. She has been running,
in evident terror, and stands against the
closed door looking about her*

Anne

Are you the inn-keeper?

[*The Player turns and bows courteously*

Nay, sir, your pardon.

I saw you not . . . And yet your face, me-
thinks, —

But — yes, I'm sure. . . .

But where's the inn-keeper?

I know not where I am, nor where to go!

The Player

Madam, it is my fortune that I may

Procure you service. (*Going towards the door*)

[*The uproar sounds nearer*

Anne

Nay! what if the bear —

The Player

The bear?

Anne

The door! The bear is broken loose.

Did you not hear? I scarce could make my way
Through that rank crowd, in search of some safe
place.

You smile, sir! But you had not seen the bear,—
Nor I, this morning. Pray you, hear me out,—
For surely you are gentler than the place.

I came . . . I came by water . . . to the Garden,
Alone, . . . from bravery, to see the show
And tell of it hereafter at the Court!

There's one of us makes count of all such
'scapes, —

('Tis Mistress Fytton). She will ever tell

The sport it is to see the people's games

Among themselves, — to go *incognita*

And take all, as it is not for the Queen,

Gallants and rabble! But by Banbury Cross,

I am of tamer mettle! — All alone,

Among ten thousand noisy watermen;

And then the foul ways leading from the Stair;

And then . . . no friends I knew, nay, not a face.

And my dear nose beset, and my pomander
Lost in the rout, — or else a cut-purse had it:
And then the bear breaks loose! Oh, 'tis a day
Full of vexations, nay, and dangers too.
I would I had been slower to outdo
The pranks of Mary Fytton. . . . You know
her, sir?

The Player

If one of my plain calling may be said
To know a maid-of-honor. (*More lightly*) And
yet more: —

My heart has cause to know the lady's face.

Anne (blankly)

Why, so it is. . . . Is't not a marvel, sir,
The way she hath? Truly, her voice is good. . . .
And yet, — but oh, she charms; I hear it said.
A winsome gentlewoman, of a wit, too.
We are great fellows; she tells me all she does;
And, sooth, I listen till my ears be like
To grow, for wonder. Whence my 'scape, to-day!

Oh, she hath daring for the pastimes here;
I would — change looks with her, to have her
spirit!

Indeed, they say she charms Some one, by this.

The Player

Some one. . . .

Anne

Hast heard?

Why, sure my Lord of Herbert,
Ay, Pembroke's son. But there I doubt, — I
doubt.

He is an eagle will not stoop for less
Than kingly prey. No bird-lime takes him.

The Player

He hath shown many favors to us players.

Herbert. . . .

Anne

Ah, now I have you!

The Player

Surely, gracious madam;
My duty; . . . what besides?

Anne

This face of yours.
'Twas in some play, belike. (*Apart*) . . . I took
him for

A man it should advantage me to know!
And he's a proper man enough. . . . Ay me!

[*When she speaks to him again it is with en-
couraging condescension*

Surely you've been at Whitehall, Master Player?

The Player (bowing)

So.

Anne

And how oft? And when?

The Player

Last Christmas tide;
And Twelfth Day eve, perchance. Your memory

Freshens a dusty past. . . . The hubbub's over.
Shall I look forth and find some trusty boy
To attend you to the river?

Anne

I thank you, sir.

[He goes to the door and steps out into the alley, looking up and down. The noise in the distance springs up again.]

(Apart.) 'Tis not past sufferance. Marry, I could stay

Some moments longer, till the streets be safe.
Sir, sir!

The Player (returning)

Command me, madam.

Anne

I will wait

A little longer, lest I meet once more
That ruffian mob, or any of the dogs.
These sports are better seen from balconies.

The Player

Will you step hither? There's an arbored walk

Sheltered and safe. Should they come by again,
You may see all, an't like you, and be hid.

Anne

A garden there? Come, you shall show it me.

[They go out into the garden on the right, leaving the door shut. Enter immediately, in great haste, Mary Fytton and William Herbert, followed by Dickon, who looks about and seeing no one, goes to setting things in order.]

Mary

Quick, quick! . . . She must have seen me. Those
big eyes,

How could they miss me, peering as she was
For some familiar face? She would have known,
Even before my mask was jostled off
In that wild rabble . . . bears and bearish men!

Herbert

Why would you have me bring you?

Mary (gaily)

Why? Ah, why!

Sooth, once I had a reason: now 'tis lost, —
Lost! Lost! Call out the bell-man.

Dickon (seriously)

Shall I so?

Herbert

Nay. nay; that were a merriment indeed,

To cry us through the streets! (*To Mary*) You
riddling charm.

Mary

A riddle, yet? You almost love me, then.

Herbert

Almost?

Mary

Because you cannot understand.

Alas, when all's unriddled, the charm goes.

Herbert

Come, you're not melancholy?

Mary

Nay, are you?

But should Nan Hughes have seen us, and spoiled
all —

Herbert

How could she so?

Mary

I know not . . . yet I know

If she had met us, she could steal To-day,
Golden To-day.

Herbert

A kiss; and so forget her.

Mary

Hush, hush, — the tavern-boy there.

(*To Dickon*) Tell me, boy, —

(*To Herbert*) Some errand, now; a roc's egg!

Strike thy wit.

Herbert

What is't you miss? Why, so. The lady's lost
A very curious reason, wrought about
With diverse broidery.

Mary

Nay, 'twas a mask.

Herbert

A mask, arch-wit? Why will you mock your-
self
And all your fine deceits? Your mask, your
reason,
Your reason with a mask!

Mary

You are too merry.

(*To Dickon*) A mask it is, and muffler finely
wrought
With little amber points all hung like bells.
I lost it as I came, somewhere. . . .

Herbert

Somewhere

Between the Paris Gardens and the Bridge.

Mary

Or below Bridge, — or haply in the Thames!

Herbert

No matter where, so you do bring it back.
Fly, Mercury! Here's feathers for thy heels.

[*Giving coin*

Mary (aside)

Weights, weights!

[*Exit Dickon*

[*Herbert looks about him, opens the door of the tap-room, grows troubled. She watches him with dissatisfaction, seeming to warm her feet by the fire meanwhile.*

Herbert (apart)

I know this place. We used to come Together, he and I . . .

Mary (apart)

Forgot again.

O the capricious tides, the hateful calms,
And the too eager ship that would be gone
Adventuring against uncertain winds,
For some new, utmost sight of Happy Isles!
Becalmed, — becalmed . . . But I will break
this calm.

[*She sees the lute on the table, crosses and takes it up, running her fingers over the strings very softly. She sits*

Herbert

Ah, mermaid, is it you?

Mary

Did you sail far?

Herbert

Not I; no, sooth. (*Crossing to her*)

Mermaid, I would not think.

But you —

Mary

I think not. I remember nothing.
There's nothing in the world but you and me;
All else is dust. Thou shalt not question me;
Or if, — but as a sphinx in woman-shape:
And if thou fail at answer, I shall turn,
And rend thy heart and cast thee from the cliff.

[She leans her head back to kiss him]

So perish all who guess not what I am! . . .
Oh, but I know you: you are April-Days.
Nothing is sure, but all is beautiful!

[She runs her fingers up the strings, one by one, and listens, speaking to the lute]

Is it not so? Come, answer. Is it true?
Speak, sweeting, since I love thee best of late,
And have forsook my virginals for thee.

All's beautiful indeed and all unsure?

'Ay' . . . (Did you hear?) *He's fair and faithless?* 'Ay.' *(Speaking with the lute)*

Herbert

Poor oracle, with only one reply! —
Wherein 'tis unlike thee.

Mary

Can he love aught

*So well as his own image in the brook,
Having once seen it?*

Herbert

Ay!

Mary

The lute saith 'No.' . . .

O dullard! Here were tidings, would you mark.
What said I? *Oracle, could he love aught*
So dear as his own image in the brook,
Having once looked? . . . No, truly.
(*With sudden abandon*) Nor can I!

Herbert

O leave this game of words, you thousand-
tongued.

Sing, sing to me. So shall I be all yours
Forever; — or at least till you be still! . . .
I used to wonder he should be thy slave:
I wonder now no more. Your ways are wonders;
You have a charm to make a man forget
His past and yours, and everything but you.

Mary (*speaking with her eyes on his face*)
'*When daisies pied and violets blue*
And lady-smocks all silver-white' —
How now?

Herbert

How now! That song . . . thou wilt sing that?

Mary

Marry, what mars the song?

Herbert

Have you forgot

Who made it?

Mary

Soft, what idleness. So fine? —
So rude? And bid me sing! You get but silence;
Or, if I sing, — beshrew me, it shall be
A dole of song, a little starveling breath
As near to silence as a song can be.

*[She sings under-breath, fantastically
Say how many kisses be
Lent and lost twixt you and me?
'Can I tell when they begun?'
Nay, but this were prodigal:
Let us learn to count withal.
Since no ending is to spending,
Sum our riches, one by one.
'You shall keep the reckoning,
Count each kiss while I do sing.'*

Herbert

Oh, not these little wounds. You vex my heart;
Heal it again with singing, — come, sweet, come.
Into the garden! None shall trouble us.
This place has memories and conscience too:
Drown all, my mermaid. Wind them in your
hair
And drown them, drown them all.

*[He swings open the garden-door for her. At
the same moment Anne's voice is heard
approaching.*

Anne (without)

Some music there?

Herbert

Perdition! Quick, — behind me, love.

[Swinging the door shut again, and looking through the crack]

Mary

'Tis she —

Nan Hughes, 'tis she! How came she here?

By heaven,

She crosses us to-day. Nan Hughes lights here
In a Bank tavern! Nay, I'll not be seen.

Sooner or later it must mean the wreck
Of both . . . should the Queen know.

Herbert

The spite of chance!

She talks with some one in the arbor there . . .
Whose face I see not. Come, here's doors at
least.

[They cross hastily. Mary opens the door on the left and looks within.]

Mary

Too thick. . . . I shall be penned. But guard
you this

And tell me when they're gone. Stay, stay; —
mend all.

If she have seen me, — swear it was not I.

Heaven speed her hence, with her new body-guard!

[Exit, closing door. Herbert looks out into the garden]

Herbert

By all accursèd chances, — none but he!

[Retires up to stand beside the door, looking out of casement. Reënter from the garden, Anne, followed by The Player.]

Anne

No, 'twas some magic in my ears, I think.

There's no one here. *(Seeing Herbert)*

But yes, there's some one here: —

The innkeeper. Are you —

Saint Catherine's ruff!

My Lord of Herbert. Sir, you could not look
More opportune. But for this gentleman —

Herbert (bowing)

My friend, this long time since, —

Anne

Marry, your friend?

The Player (regarding Herbert searchingly)

This long time since.

Anne

Nay, is it so, indeed?

(To Herbert) My day's fulfilled of blunders!

O sweet sir,

How can I tell you? But I'll tell you all,
If you'll but bear me escort from this place
Where none of us belongs. Yours is the first
Familiar face I've seen this afternoon!

Herbert (apart)

A sweet assurance.

(Aloud.)

But you seek . . . you need
Some rest — some cheer, some — Will you step
within? *[Pointing to the tap-room]*

The tavern is deserted, but —

Anne

Not here!

I've been here quite an hour. Come, citywards,
To Whitehall! I have had enough of bears
To quench my longing till next Whitsuntide.
Down to the river, pray you.

Herbert

Sooth, at once?

Anne

At once, at once.

(To The Player)

I crave your pardon, sir,
For sundering your friendships. I've heard say
Some woman ever crosses 'twixt two men,
To their confusion. You shall drink amends
Some other day. I must be safely home.

The Player (half reassured)

It joys me that your trials have found an end;

And for the rest, I wish you prosperous voyage;
Which needs not, with such halcyon weather
toward.

Herbert (apart)

It cuts: and yet he knows not. Can it pass?

(To him) Let us meet soon. I have — I know
not what

To say — nay, no import; but chance has parted
Our several ways too long. To leave you thus,
Without a word —

Anne (pettishly)

You are in haste, my lord!

By the true faith, here are two friends indeed!
Two lovers crossed: and I, — 'tis I that bar
them!

Pray tarry, sir. I doubt not I may light
Upon some link-boy to attend me home,
Or else a drunken prentice with a club,
Or that patched keeper strolling from the Gar-
den

With all his dogs along; or failing them,
A pony with a monkey on his back,
Or, failing that, a bear! Some escort, sure,
Such as the Borough offers! I shall look
Part of a pageant from the Lady Fair,
And boast for three full moons, 'Such sights I
saw!'

Truly, 'tis new to me: but I doubt not
I shall trick out a mind for strange adven-
ture,

As high as — Mistress Fytton!

Herbert

Say no more,

Dear lady! I entreat you pardon me
The lameness of my wit. I'm stark adream;
You lighted here so suddenly, unlooked for
Vision in Bankside! Let me hasten you,
Now that I see I dream not. It grows late.

Anne

And can you grant me such a length of time?

Herbert

Length? Say Illusion! Time? Alas, 'twill be
Only a poor half-hour, (*loudly*) a poor half-hour!
(*Apart*) Could she hear that, I wonder?

The Player (bowing over Anne's hand)

Not so, madam;

A little gold of largess, fallen to me
By chance.

Herbert (to him)

A word with you —

(*Apart*)

O, I am gagged!

Anne (to The Player)

You go with us, sir?

[*He moves towards door with them*]

The Player

No, I do but play

Your inn-keeper.

Herbert (apart, despairingly)

The eagle is gone blind.

[Exeunt all three, leaving the doors open.

They are seen to go down the walk together.

At the street they pause, The Player bowing slowly, then turning back towards the inn; Anne holding Herbert's arm. Within, the door on the left opens slightly, then Mary appears.

Mary

'Tis true. My ears caught silence, if no more.

They're gone. . . .

[She comes out of her hiding-place and opens the left-hand casement to see Anne disappearing with Herbert.

She takes him with her! He'll return?

Gone, gone, without a word; and I was caged, —
And deaf as well. O, spite of everything!

She's so unlike. . . . How long shall I be here

To wait and wonder? He with her — with her!

[The Player, having come slowly back to the door, hears her voice. Mary darts towards the entrance to look after Herbert and Anne. She sees him and recoils. She falls back

*step by step, while he stands with his hands
upon the door-posts, impassive.*

You!...

The Player

Yes....

[*After a pause*

And you.

Mary

Do you not ask me why

I'm here?

The Player

I am not wont to shun the truth:

But yet I think the reason you could give

Were too uncomely.

Mary

Nay; —

The Player

If it were truth....

If it were truth! Although that likelihood
Scarce threatens.

Mary

So. Condemned without a trial.

The Player

O speak the lie now. Let there be no chance
For my unsightly love, bound head and foot,
Stark, full of wounds and horrible, to find
Escape from out its charnel-house; to rise
Unwelcome before eyes that had forgot,

And say it died not truly. It should die.
 Play no imposture: leave it, — it is dead.
 I have been weak in that I tried to pour
 The wine through plague-struck veins. It came
 to life

Over and over, drew sharp breath again
 In torture such as't may be to be born,
 If a poor babe could tell. Over and over,
 I tell you, it has suffered resurrection,
 Cheating its pain with hope, only to die
 Over and over; — die more deaths than men
 The meanest, most forlorn, are made to die
 By tyranny or nature. . . . Now I see all
 Clear. And I say, it shall not rise again.
 I am as safe from you as I were dead.
 I know you.

Mary

Herbert —

The Player

Do not touch his name.

Leave that; I saw.

Mary

You saw? Nay, what?

The Player

The whole

Clear story. — Not at first. While you were hid,
 I took some comfort, drop by drop, and minute

By minute. (Dullard!) Yet there was a maze
Of circumstance that showed even then to me,
Perplex and strange. You here, unravel it.
All's clear: you are the clew. [*Turning away*

Mary (going to the casement)

(*Apart*) Caged, caged!

Does he know all? Why were those walls so
dense?

(*To him*) Nan Hughes hath seized the time to
tune your mind

To some light gossip. Say, how came she here?

The Player

All emulation, thinking to match you

In high adventure: — liked it not, poor lady!

And is gone home, attended.

Reënter Dickon

Dickon (to Mary)

They be lost! —

Thy mask and muffler; — 'tis no help to search.

Some hooker would 'a' swallowed 'em, be sure,

As the whale swallows Jonas, in the show.

Mary

'Tis nought: I care not.

Dickon (looking at the fire)

Hey, it wants a log.

[*While he mends the fire, humming, The
Player stands by him taking thought.*

*Mary speaks apart, going to the casement
again to look out.*

Mary (apart)

I will have what he knows. To cast me off: —
Not thus, not thus. Peace, I can blind him yet,
Or he'll despise me. Nay, I will not be
Thrust out at door like this. I will not go
But by mine own free will. There is no power
Can say what he might do to ruin us,
To win Will Herbert from me, — almost mine,
And I all his, all his — O April-Days! —
Well, friendship against love? I know who wins.
He is grown dread. . . . But yet he is a man.

[Exit Dickon into tap-room

(To The Player, suavely) Well, headsman?

[He does not turn

Mind your office: I am judged.
Guilty, was it not so? . . . What is to do,
Do quickly. . . . Do you wait for some reprieve?
Guilty, you said. Nay, do you turn your face
To give me some small leeway of escape?
And yet, I will not go . . .

[Coming down slowly

Well, headsman? . . .

You ask not why I came here, Clouded Brow,
Will you not ask me why I stay? No word?
O blind, come lead the blind! For I, I too

Lack sight and every sense to linger here
And make me an intruder, where I once
Was welcome, oh most welcome, as I dreamed!
Look on me, then. I do confess, I have
Too often preened my feathers in the sun,
And thought to rule a little, by my wit.
I have been spendthrift with men's offerings
To use them like a nosegay, — tear apart,
Petal by petal, leaf by leaf, until
I found the heart all bare, the curious heart
I longed to see, for once, and cast away.
And so, at first, with you. . . . Ah, now I think
You're wise. There's nought so fair, so . . .
curious,

So precious-rare to find, as honesty.
'Twas all a child's play then; a counting-off
Of petals. Now I know. . . . But ask me why
I come unheralded, and in a mist
Of circumstance and strangeness. Listen,
love, —

Well then, dead love, if you will have it so.
I have been cunning, cruel, — what you will:
And yet the days of late have seemed too long
Even for summer! Something called me here.
And so I flung my pride away and came, —
A very woman for my foolishness! —
To say once more, — to say . . .

The Player

No, I'll not ask.

What lacks? I need no more; you have done well.
 'Tis rare. There is no man I ever saw
 But you could school him. Women should be
 players.

You are sovran in the art: feigning and truth
 Are so commingled in you. Sure, to you
 Nature's a simpleton hath never seen
 Her own face in the well. Is there aught else,
 To ask of my poor calling?

Mary

I have deserved it

In other days. Hear how I can be meek.
 I am come back; a foot-worn runaway,
 Like any braggart boy. Let me sit down
 And take Love's horn-book in my hands again,
 And learn from the beginning; — by the rod,
 If you will scourge me, love! Come, come, for-
 give.

I am not wont to sue: and yet to-day
 I am your suppliant, I am your servant,
 Your link-boy, yes, your minstrel: so, — wilt
 hear?

*[Takes up the lute, and gives a last look out of
 the casement]*

The tumult in the streets is all apart

With the discordant past. The hour that is,
Shall be the only thing in all the world.
(*Apart.*) I will be safe. He'll win not Herbert
from me!

[*Crossing to him*

Will you have music, good my lord?

The Player (catching the lute from her)

Not that,

Not that! By heaven, you shall not. . . . Never-
more.

Mary

So . . . But you speak at last. You are, forsooth,
A man. And you shall use me as my due: —
A woman, not the wind about your ears;
A woman, whom you loved.

The Player (half-apart, still holding the lute)

Why were you not

That beauty that you seemed? . . . But had you
been,

'Tis true, you would have had no word for me, —
No looks of love.

Mary

The man reproaches me?

The Player

Not I — not I. . . . Will Herbert, what am I
To lay this broken trust to you? — To you,
Young, free, and tempted: April on his way,

Whom all hands reach for, and this woman here
Had set her heart upon!

Mary (with sudden fury)

What fantasy!

Surely he must have been from town of late,
To see the gude-folk! And how fare they, sir?
Reverend yeoman, say, how thrive the sheep?
What did the harvest yield you? — Did you
count

The cabbage heads? and find how like . . . nay,
nay!

But our gude-wife, did she bid in the neighbors
To prove them that her husband was no myth?
Some Puritan preacher, nay, some journeyman,
To make you sup the sweeter with long prayers?
This were a rare conversion, by my soul!
From sonnets unto sermons: — eminent!

The Player

Oh, yes, your scorn bites truly: sermons next.
There is so much to say. But it must be learned;
And I require hard schooling, dream too much
On what I would men were, — but women most.
I need the cudgel of the task-master
To make me con the truth. Yes, blind, you
called me,

And 'tis my shame I bandaged mine own eyes
And held them dark. Now, by the grace of God,

Or haply because the devil tries too far,
I tear the blindfold off, and I see all.
I see you as you are; and in your heart
The secret love sprung up for one I loved,
A reckless boy who has trodden on my soul —
But that's a thing apart, concerns not you.
I know that you will stake your heaven and
earth
To fool me, — fool us both.

Mary (with some interest)

Why were you not
So stern a long time since? You're not so wise
As I have heard them say.

The Player (standing by the chimney)

Wise? Oh, not I.
Who was so witless as to call me wise?
Sure he had never bade me a good-day
And seen me take the cheer. . . .

I was your fool
Too long. . . . I am no longer anything.
Speak: What are you?

Mary (after a pause)

The foolishhest of women:
A heart that should have been adventurer
On the high seas; a seeker in new lands,
To dare all and to lose. But I was made
A woman.

Oh, you see; — could you see all!
 What if I say . . . the truth is not so far,

[*Watching him*

Yet farther than you dream. If I confess . . .
 He charmed my fancy . . . for the moment, —
 ay

The shine of his fortunes too, the very name
 Of Pembroke? . . . Dear my judge, — ah,
 clouded brow

And darkened fortune, be not black to me!
 I'd try for my escape; the window's wide,
 No one forbids, and yet I stay — I stay.

.
 Oh, I was niggard, once, unkind — I know,
 Untrusty: loved, unloved you, day by day:
 A little and a little, — why, I knew not,
 And more, and wondered why; — then not at
 all! —

Drank up the dew from out your very heart,
 Like the extortionate sun, to leave you parched;
 Till, with as little grace, I flung all back
 In gust of angry rain! I have been cruel.
 But the spell works; yea, love, the spell, the
 spell

Fed by your fasting, by your subtlety
 Past all men's knowledge. . . . There is some-
 thing rare

About you that I long to flee and cannot: —
Some mastery . . . that's more my will than I.

[She laughs softly. He listens, looking straight ahead, not at her, motionless but suffering evidently. She watches his face and speaks with greater intensity. Here she crosses nearer and falls on her knees.]

Ah, look: you shall believe, you shall believe.
Will you put by your Music? Was I that?
Your Music, — very Music? . . . Listen, then,
Turn not so blank a face. Thou hast my love.
I'll tell thee so, till thought itself shall tire
And fall a-dreaming like a weary child; . . .
Only to dream of you, and in its sleep
To murmur You. . . . Ah, look at me, love,
lord . . .

Whom queens would honor. Read these eyes you
praised,

That pitied, once, — that sue for pity now.
But look! You shall not turn from me —

The Player

Eyes, Eyes! —

The darkness hides so much.

Mary

He'll not believe . . .

What can I do? What more, — what more, you
. . . man?

I bruise my heart here, at an iron gate. . . .

[She regards him gloomily without rising

Yet there is one thing more. . . . You'll take me,
now —

My meaning. You were right. For once I say it.

There is a glory of discovery (*ironically*)

To the black heart . . . because it may be known

But once, — but once. . . .

I wonder men will hide

Their motives all so close. If they could
guess, —

It is so new to feel the open day

Look in on all one's hidings, at the end.

*[She shrugs her shoulders, rises, and stands
off, regarding him fixedly*

So. . . . You were right. The first was all a lie:
A lie, and for a purpose . . .

Now, —

And why, I know not, — but 'tis true, at last,
I do believe . . . I love you.

Look at me!

*[He stands by the fireside against the chimney-
piece. She crosses to him with passionate
appeal, holding out her arms. He turns his
eyes and looks at her with a rigid scrutiny.
She endures it for a second, then wavers;
makes an effort, unable to look away, to lift*

her arms towards his neck; they falter and fall at her side. The two stand spellbound by mutual recognition. Then she speaks in a strained voice.

Mary

Oh, let me go!

[She turns her head with an effort, — gathers her cloak about her; hesitates with averted eyes, then hastens out as if from some terror.

[The Player is alone beside the chimney-piece. The street outside is darkening with twilight through the casements and upper door. There is a sound of rough-throated singing that comes by and is softened with distance. It breaks the spell.

The Player

So; it is over . . . now.

[He looks into the fire

.
Fair, kind, and true. — And true. — My golden Friend!

Both . . . both, together. . . . He was ill at ease.
But that he should betray me with a kiss!

.
By this preposterous world . . . I am in need.
Shall there be no faith left? Nothing but names?

Then he's a fool who steers his life by such.
Why not the body-comfort of this herd
Of creatures huddled here to keep them warm? —
Trying to drown out with enforced laughter
The query of the winds . . . unanswered winds
That scourge the soul with a perpetual doubt.
What holds me? — Bah, that were a Cause, indeed!

To prove your soul one truth, by being it, —
Against the foul dishonor of the world!
How else prove aught? . . .

I talk into the air.
And at my feet, my honor full of wounds.
Honor? Whose honor? For I knew my sin,
And she . . . had none. There's nothing to
avenge.

[He speaks with more and more passion, too distraught to notice interruptions. Enter Dickon, with a tallow-dip. He regards The Player with half-open mouth from the corner; then stands by the casement, leaning up against it and yawning now and then.]

I had no right: that I could call her mine
So none should steal her from me, and die for't.
There's nothing to avenge . . . Brave beggary!
How fit to lodge me in this home of Shows,
With all the ruffian life, the empty mirth,

The gross imposture of humanity,
Strutting in virtues it knows not to wear,
Knave in a stolen garment — all the same —
Until it grows enamored of a life
It was not born to, — falls a-dream, poor cheat,
In the midst of its native shams, — the thieves
and bears

And ballad-mongers all! . . . Of such am I.

[Reënter Tobias and one or two taverners.

Tobias regards The Player, who does not notice any one, — then leads off Dickon by the ear. Exeunt into the tap-room. The Player goes to the casement, pushes it wide open, and looks out at the sky.

Is there nought else? . . . I could make shift to
bind

My heart up and put on my mail again,
To cheat myself and death with one fight more,
If I could think there were some worldly use
For bitter wisdom.

But I'm no general,
That my own hand-to-hand with evil days
Should cheer my doubting thousands . . .

I'm no more
Than one man lost among a multitude;
And in the end dust swallows them — and me,
And the good sweat that won our victories.

Who sees? Or seeing, cares? Who follows on?
Then why should my dishonor trouble me,
Or broken faith in him? *What is it suffers?*
And why? Now that the moon is turned to blood.

*[He turns towards the door with involuntary
longing, and seems to listen]*

No . . . no, he will not come. Well, I have
nought

To do but pluck from me my bitter heart,
And breathe without it.

*[Reënter Dickon with a tankard and a cup.
He sets them down on a small table; this he
pushes toward The Player, who turns at the
noise.]*

. . . So. Is it for me?

Dickon

Ay, on the score! I had good sight o' the bear.
Look, here's a sprig was stuck on him with
pitch; —

[Rubbing a little green sprig on his sleeve]
I caught it up, — from Lambeth marsh, belike.
Such grow there, and I've seen thee cherish such.

The Player

Give us thy posy.

*[He comes back to the fire and sits in the chair
near by. Dickon gets out the iron lantern
from the corner.]*

Dickon (whistling)

Hey! It wants a light.

[The Player *seems to listen once more, his face turned towards the door. He lifts his hand as if to hush Dickon, lets it fall, and looks back at the fire. Dickon regards him with shy longing and draws nearer.*

Dickon

Thou wilt be always minding of the fire . . .
Wilt thou not?

The Player

Ay.

Dickon

It likes me, too.

The Player

So?

Dickon

Ay. . . .

I would I knew what thou art thinking on
When thou dost mind the fire. . . .

The Player

Wouldst thou?

Dickon

Ay.

[*Sound of footsteps outside. A group approaches the door.*

Oh, here he is, come back!

The Player (rising with passionate eagerness)

Brave lad — brave lad!

Dickon (singing)

*Hang out your lanthorns, trim your lights
To save your days from knavish nights!*

[He plunges, with his lantern, through the doorway, stumbling against Wat Burrow, who enters, a sorry figure, the worse for wear.]

Wat (sourly)

Be the times soft, that you must try to cleave
Way through my ribs as tho' I was the moon? —
And you the man-wi'-the-lanthorn, or his dog?—
You bean! . . .

[Exit Dickon. Wat shambles in and sees The Player.]

What, you, sir, here?

The Player

Still here; ay, Wat.

[While Wat crosses to the table and gets himself a chair, The Player looks at him as if with a new consciousness of the surroundings. After a time he sits as before. Re-enter Dickon and curls up on the floor, at his feet with bashful devotion.]

Wat

O give me comfort, sir. This cursèd day, —

A wry, damned . . . noisome. . . . Ay, poor Nick,
poor Nick!

He's all to mend — Poor Nick! He's sorely
maimed,

More than we'd baited him with forty dogs.

'Od's body! Said I not, sir, he would fight?

Never before had he, in leading-chain,

Walked out to take the air and show his coat. . . .

'Went to his noddle like some greenest gull's

That's new come up to town. . . . The Pren-
tices

Squeaking along like Bedlam, he breaks loose

And prances me a hey, — I dancing counter!

Then such a cawing 'mongst the women! Next,

The chain did clatter and enrage him more; —

You would 'a' sworn a bear grew on each link,

And after each a prentice with a cudgel, —

Leaving him scarce an eye! So, howling all,

We run a pretty pace . . . and Nick, poor Nick,

He catches on a useless, stumbling fry

That needed not be born, — and bites into him.

And then . . . the Constable . . . And now, no
show!

The Player

Poor Wat! . . . Thou wentest scattering misad-
venture

Like comfits from thy horn of plenty, Wat.

Wat

Ay, thank your worship. You be best to comfort.
[*He pours a mug of ale*

No show to-morrow! Minnow Constable. . . .

I'm a jack-rabbit strung up by my heels

For every knave to pinch as he goes by!

Alas, poor Nick, bear Nick. . . oh, think on
Nick.

The Player

With all his fortunes darkened for a day, —

And the eye o' his reason, sweet intelligencer,

Under a beggarly patch. . . . I pledge thee, Nick.

Wat

Oh, you have seen hard times, sir, with us all.

Your eyes lack lustre, too, this day. What say
you?

No jesting. . . . What? I've heard of marvels
there

In the New Country. There would be a knop-
hole

For thee and me. There be few Constables

And such unhallowed fry. . . . An thou wouldst
lay

Thy wit to mine — what is't we could not do?

Wilt turn't about?

[*Leans towards him in cordial confidence*

Nay, you there, sirrah boy,

Leave us together; as 'tis said in the play,
'Come, leave us, Boy!'

*[Dickon does not move. He gives a sigh
and leans his head against The Player's
knee, his arms around his legs. He sleeps.
The Player gazes sternly into the fire,
while Wat rambles on, growing drowsy.]*

Wat

The cub there snores good counsel. When all's
done,

What a bubble is ambition!... When all's
done...

What's yet to do?... Why, sleep.... Yet
even now

I was on fire to see myself and you

Off for the Colony, with Raleigh's men.

I've been beholden to 'ee.... Why, for thee

I could make shift to suffer plays o' Thurs-
day.

Thou'rt the best man among them, o' my
word.

There's other trades and crafts and qualities

Could serve... an thou wouldst lay thy wit to
mine.

Us two!... us two!...

The Player (apart, to the fire)

'Fair, kind and true.'...

Wat

... Poor Nick!

[He nods over his ale. There is muffled noise in the tap-room. Some one opens the door a second, letting in a stave of a song, then slams the door shut. The Player, who has turned, gloomily, starts to rise. Dickon moves in his sleep, and settles his cheek against The Player's shoes. The Player looks down. Then he sits again, looking now at the fire, now at the boy, whose hair he touches.]

The Player

So, Heavy-head. You bid me think my thought
Twice over; keep me by, — a heavy heart,
As ballast for thy dream. Well, I will watch ...
Like slandered Providence. Nay, I'll not be
The prop to fail thy trust untenderly,
After a troubled day. ...

Nay, rest you here.

CURTAIN

MARLOWE
A Drama in Five Acts

(Published in 1901)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

ROBERT GREENE, }

THOMAS LODGE, }

THOMAS NASHE, }

GEORGE PEELE, }

. *Playwrights and friends
of Marlowe.*

GILES BARNBY *Of Canterbury.*

GABRIEL ANDREW *A young kinsman of Barnby's.*

RICHARD BAME.

OWEN, }

DAVY, }

. *South-Londoners.*

FRANCIS ARCHER.

ROWSE *A sailor.*

HOST OF DEPTFORD TAVERN.

JERMYN *Servant to Her Ladyship.*

BOY *At The Bee-Hive.*

THE WATCH.

BELLMAN.

HER LADYSHIP *Of the Court.*

ALISON *Barnby's Daughter.*

DAME BENET *Hostess of The Bee-Hive.*

GILL *Of Deptford.*

The Watchmen, link-boys, taverners, prentices, men and women.

The action takes place between London and Canterbury,

A. D. 1589-1593.



Marlowe

ACT I. SCENE I

SCENE: *Interior of 'The Bee-Hive,' South London. A late Spring morning. Centre, a wide door-way, showing the street. Left (up), a door leading from a short flight of steps; (down) another door open on the inn garden. Right, a large chimney-place; a door beyond. Rushes on the floor. Sundry musical instruments hanging on the wall. — Down, to the left, a table set forth with mugs. Right, near the chimney, a smaller table; chairs. — Discovered at rise: DAME BENET and the BOY busied with Taverners going and coming. At the smaller table, alone, throwing dice, PEELE.*

Enter NASHE and LODGE, calling hilariously.

Nashe



O, 'Faustus!'

Lodge

— Faustus, O! The hour is on,
Come forth!

Nashe

— Come forth, wherevèr thou art hid!
(*To Benet.*) Dame, we are bidden here, and he
is pledged

To pay the score. Reveal his hiding-place.

Lodge

Sing, Muse!

Benet

What manner o' man?

Nashe, Peele (laughing)

O, Faustus, Faustus!

Lodge

— Where are thy laurels? — Why, Kit Mar-
lowe then. (*They join Peele.*)

Benet

Eh, Marlowe? Will you call him by his name?

[*Hallooing without.*]

Enter Greene

Greene

Where is our Faustus? (*Seeing Benet.*)

Soft. . . .

Benet (incensed)

O, Master Greene!

'T is Master Greene again!

Greene

It is, it is. —

I am an honored guest : forbid me not !

I come to celebrate Kit Marlowe's play

Of *Faustus* ; but I swear to pledge thee first,

In thy most superfine —

Benet

I warrant you ! —

Greene

— Of muscadine. Do so, my Inspiration !

These gentlemen are slack, but I am constant,

And I'll begin, if thou wilt fetch the pint.

Benet

You are most constant, sir, in pledging me,

But Master Peele there, has begun already ;

Share cup with him.

Greene

She doubts me ! George, you knave,

Could you not save your thirst a little while

And drink a rouse to Kit, his tragedy ?

(*To Benet.*) Come, if you will be stern, Zeno-
crate, —

There is the test of notability

In all this verse. Come, chick, I'll take thee
out

To see 't some day. Thou shalt hear *Faustus*
swear!

And when Kit empties out his pocketful
To pay his score, and many scores to come,
And thine, and mine, and ours and every
man's, —

Why, thou shalt grant me that it is a play!

[*Joins the others.*]

Enter Barnby, in haste

Barnby

Good hostess, — pray you, dame!

Benet

Give you good day.

Barnby

Canst thou, good woman, tell me anything
Of Gabriel Andrew?

Benet

Master Andrew? Ay

He's wont to come here for a packet, sir,
Each week and sometimes more; some news
it is

Of Canterbury.

Barnby

Ay, we're kinsmen there.

Benet

He should be here this noon.

Barnby

Eh, heaven be praised !

I will return anon, and bring my daughter.

We met with mischief here upon our way

To London, — where I go for marketing,

And she to visit. — Wilt thou keep a place

Where she may rest ?

Benet

O, sir, as neat as heaven.

Barnby

That 's well ; that should suffice. (*Going.*)

For let me not

Conceal from you, — I am of Canterbury —

It was my chance to have my money stolen.

Some cut-purse in the street —

Benet (coldly)

Then, sir, you 'd better

Try 'The Three Tuns' or —

Barnby

Nay, nay, I 'll be plain.

This Gabriel Andrew is some kin of mine

And he will gladly lend me what I owe.

Benet (curtseying)

Oh, — Master Andrew !

[*Exit Barnby.*]

Enter Davy and Owen, talking

Davy

Come, that should be brave!

Owen

I say, I saw it; and I'll go again,
That will I!

Peele (aside)

Hist!

[*Davy and Owen sit at the longer table, left.*

Owen

Boy, fetch a pint of ale.

Davy

But what's a '*Faustus*'?

Owen

Why, it is the man!

This man you hear me tell of, in the play!—

Peele

(Come, listen here!)

Owen

And *Faustus* is his name;

And he it is, doth sell him to the Devil.

[*The playwrights approach, one by one, affecting a thirst for information. Other Taverners gather about.*

Peele

What man is this?

Davy

It is a man i' the play —

Owen

'T is a new play ; I saw it yesterday.

He sells his soul to the Devil.

Nashe (hastening up)

For how much?

What did the Devil pay for him?

Lodge

— What man?

Owen

Why, Faustus is his name. — It is a scholar
That doth most rare high talking ; full of
names

Of all the arts that ever you shall hear.

He tells of magic — and of Zodiac —

But yet he will have more !

Nashe

Who's Zodiac?

Owen

Well, let that be. . . . He signs away his soul
Unto the Devil, and he signs with blood.

Greene

Nay, in plain sight?

*Enter Marlowe. — He is reading a ballad that
he carries in his hand. He is unobserved*

by the Taverners, who are absorbed in this account of 'Faustus'; and the name catches his ear. He stands behind his friends and hears with repressed excitement.

Owen (to the group)

Ay, you should see it, you!

'T is marvellous high with every kind of words;
And beyond that, 't is full of devilry,
And divers charms of magic and hell-fire;
Until his hour is come that he must die, —
When clock strikes twelve. And by and by
he says,

' O *Faustus*, — *Faustus!* ' Ye should hear him
say —

Greene (ranting)

— O *Faustus*, O! — And what ado in that?
Shall this waste pennies? Shall this bring a
crowd

By bridge, by water, — horse and heels, to see?
To pay a penny for a's standing-room,
And hear a dismal speech of ' *Faustus*, O!
Thou hast one hour to live! ' —

Owen

— So cuff me, now!

'T is a brave play.

Davy

— Od'sbody ! I will go

And see that very play this afternoon.

I'll try it at a penny, and if 't be

As good as thou wilt say, I'll have a chair,

That will I !

Lodge

This is madness. — Spendthrift, stay !

Lend me thine ear. (*Taking him by the ear.*)

Nashe

Friend, friend, you force the loan.

Lodge

Why should a man desire to witness this

Poor raven inspiration ?

Peele

Why dost thou

Waste a good penny on a dolorous tale

Of how a man sells his immortal soul

To the Devil ?

Marlowe

Ay ! (*They turn.*)

What think you strange in that ?

'T is an old tale, — a tale of every day.

Owen (doggedly)

I never heard it ; and the play is brave.

He signs away his soul for twenty years

Of power and glory; power and power and
power!

He will have, and he must have, and he will.

Whatever 't is, why he will have it! —

Marlowe

Ah!

Doth thy tongue stick at that?

Owen

But his doth fire!

He in the play, there is no holding him.

(*Marlowe listens, with burning eyes.*)

A made my ears hum! — 'T is a godless
thing, —

But for to see the arts he does, and all,
How he will raise up spirits to do his will,
And has *Fair Helen* out o' the history
To be his love —

Marlowe

So! Does he that?

Owen

Fair Helen?

He 'll have the very Sun out o' the sky!

And in the end —

Marlowe

— The end?

Owen

The hour comes on ;
The hour it strikes. — And after all, Hell has
him! (*Loud laughter.*)

Marlowe

So merry ?

Davy

Brave !

Owen

But you should see it, you !
How when he signs with Mephistophilis, —
A poor sad devil, Mephistophilis —
I never saw a devil sad before —

Lodge

Marry, wake up !

Owen

You would be thanking heaven
It did not fall to you : else who could say ? . . .
But later, look you, when his hour was come,
I did not grudge him, — by the mass, not I !
He talked of heaven and did make much of
God,

So I began to heed, against my will,
And came nigh to a terror. (*Rises.*)

Marlowe

That were base.

Owen (vext)

Oh, say you so! But if you see the play,
Grin if you can at that! — It is a wonder
How this man Faustus, who is damned in the
end,

As all men know, should so call out on God
As to put me in a terror!

*[Exeunt Owen and Davy. Taverners dis-
perse. The playwrights rush on Marlowe.
Marlowe consults his ballad.]*

Marlowe

What is the air,
'Fortune, my Foe'? *[They hum, meditating.]*

Lodge

Come, have you spent the morning
Making a riddle?

Peele

Come, wool-gatherer!
Have mercy. I am dry.

Marlowe

Boy, bring the sack. *[Exit Boy.]*
Help me. I have a rival in the street. —
'Ballad of Faustus'!

Greene

Go up higher, Kit.
The gods invite thee.

Nashe

Bite not, bite not, envy!

Lodge

O Fame, O Fame, I see thou art resolved
To sup with us to-night.

Marlowe (looking up hastily)

To-night? What say you? —

Lodge

I speak of Fortune—'t is a fickle lady. —

[*Marlowe recovers himself.*

But not the only one. Come, read.

[*They sit at the table, to the right.*

Marlowe (reading)

'*The Judgment*' —

The Judgment, mark! — '*of God, showed upon one
John Faustus, Doctor in Divinity.*

Tune, *Fortune is my Foe.*' — What tune is that?

'*All Christian men, give ear awhile to me,*

How I am plunged in pain, but cannot die:' —

Greene (reading)

'*I liv'd a life the like none did before!*' —

Reënter Boy, with wine

Peele

Alas, alack! —

Lodge

No more — no more —

All

No more! —

*Enter Gabriel Andrew. (Benet meets him.)**Gabriel*

Good-day to you!

Benet

You're called for, Master Andrew.
Some kin of yours in Canterbury —

*Reënter Barnby.**Barnby*

Hey, lad —

'T is I! — What, Gabriel, lad!

Gabriel (turning)

God save you, sir! —

*[Their loud greeting attracts the notice of
the playwrights]*

Nashe

Who's the old Puritan? I scent Puritan.
Gr-r-r-r!

Peele

Down, down, sir! Naught but yeoman.

Greene

— Russet, boy!

Barnby (to Gabriel)

I saw thee, lad. I saw thee, over yon
Just out of hearing. Eh! There is a smack

Of Canterbury still about thee, sir,
No guilds nor crafts nor prenticeships can take,
Nor City, nor the Borough. — Well, 't is
brave! —

No city like our own; and so say all
That come to see it. — Stay now, wait a bit.
Well done, well done. Here's more of us;
my girl!

[He hastens to the doorway and beckons.]

Our Alison. — I brought her up to visit
With our she-cousin Fenwick, over Bridge.
And well I put small money by my purse, —
Barely enough, mark that! — I lost it all.
Some cut-purse, lad, some prigger or some rook
Hath fleeced us on the way. And but for one
Young fellow passing, of a sober tongue,
Who showed us hither —

Enter Alison, followed by Richard Bame.

*She stands in the doorway timidly, looking
about her. Barnby still talks to Gabriel.*

Greene

Ah, look there, look there!

Lodge

Hey, nonny!

Marlowe

I was born in Canterbury.

I did not know such grew there.

Lodge

You are blind.

You are as blind as Love. I told you so.

Marlowe

But see her stand, the little Quietude!

Greene

She is my only shepherdess. Behold,
 My next Song knocking at a hovel-door. —
 O gods, how I will sing her!

Barnby (turning)

Alison.

[*She comes down, followed by Bame.**Lodge*

Name for a honeysuckle!

Nashe

Oh, scholastic!

Greene (aside)

O eglantine and hawthorn, Lady May! —
 And strawberries — and dew, — and clotted
 cream!

Barnby

Our girl, sir Master Andrew. Alison,
 Give him good day.

Gabriel

You 'll not forget me, mistress?

Alison

No, Gabriel, No!

Barnby

No, sooth ! Well said, well said.
You were a prentice when she saw you last,
Good master-craftsman, eh ! — But it takes
years

To season our green lads of Canterbury.
None like 'em. Eh ? — None like 'em.

Marlowe (aside)

None, indeed !

Here 's too much welcome, look you, for one
man.

Eglantine, hawthorn, dew, and Lady May ! —
He cannot have it all. — I 'm russet, too !

*[Rising impetuously and approaching the
country group]*

What news from Canterbury ?

Nashe, Greene, Lodge, Peele (behind him)

'Ware Tamburlaine ! —

Hist, Russet !

*[The Canterbury people turn to look at him.
Bame, hanging about for a word draws
near. The playwrights ply Marlowe
with asides.]*

Marlowe (to Barnby, naïvely)

I beg indulgence, but methought I saw

Some Canterbury tan upon that face.

Sure, no mistaking such! —

[*Barnby and Gabriel consult.*

Nashe

Kit, this is better
Than thy whole course of playing at The Cur-
tain.

Greene

Inspired Shepherd —

Peele

— Dog!

Marlowe (winningly)

Doth no one know

Christopher Marlowe?

(*To Benet, aside.*) What's the old man's name?

[*She whispers.*

Marlowe (to Barnby)

I see, I am forgotten.

Barnby (puzzled)

Nay, nay, come: —

Marlowe

I pray your pardon.

Barnby

Marlin, didst thou say?

Alison

Christopher Marlowe?

Lodge (aside)

Soft!

Marlowe

Madam, your voice
Sounds of the sky-lark rising from the downs
At home! [*Alison is dumb with admiration.*

Bame (moodily to Barnby)

Well, I may go, sir, since you find
Friends everywhere about you. —

Barnby

Nay, come, come!
This is the young man, Gabriel, whom we met
After I missed my purse. —

[*Playwrights delighted.*

'T was he did show us —

Marlowe

But surely you've a welcome for Kit Marlowe?

Barnby

Eh! Son of Marlowe? John, the shoemaker?
I know thy brothers well. [*Consults Alison.*

Marlowe

The devil he does! —

Lodge (aside)

Down, Tamburlaine!

Alison (to Marlowe)

Sometimes they speak of thee.

Marlowe

Sometimes? Indeed, I hope! —

(*Apart.*) But not too often!

[*Alison, left, talking to her father. Bame accosts Marlowe.*

Bame

Wilt have thyself the only man in Kent?

I too have kin in Canterbury.

Marlowe

Too late.

The kinsfolk are all gone. You know you
are

Some borderer, some third wife's second-cousin,
Some stranger-in-law to a step-farther-on!

Now, I have never seen you till to-day;

And, as a Kentish man, I will commend

No other man unto a Kentish maid.

Go to, go to. Thy conduct may approve thee,
When time lets all be seen. Patience, good
soul!

Remember that the meek inherit the earth, —
When other men are done with it.

(*To Barnby*) I, sir,

Glory to call my own our blessed City;

How timely happy, I have never known

Until this happy morning, — that dear Shrine

Of the most holy Martyr — (*aside*) and of me.
'T was at the King's School —

Alison

I remember thee! —

When I was little.

Marlowe (aside)

Save me, Reminiscence. —

(*To her.*) And I a school-boy? — As I live!

Wert thou —

Wert thou the little poppet, used to cling
Fast to my hand when I was sent to buy
A pennyworth of bread? And was it thou, —
Growing no taller than a wild sweet-brier —
Used to reach up a piteous little hand,
To stroke the pigeons at the poulterer's,
Strung up to buy, — and call them 'pretty
birds,'

And blow their feathers soft, to wake them up?

Alison

Why that was I! Father, he knows me
well.

Marlowe (to Greene)

How now, Cock Robin?

Greene (aside)

And I swore he could
Never create a woman! — Name us to her,
Or I denounce thee.

Peele

Share and share alike.

Gabriel (to Marlowe)

There be not many of our town, you mind,
That share your quality.

Marlowe

Yet, oftentime

I dream of those old days and turn about
Whether it were not better to go back
To the old folk, — the sheep. —

Nashe (prompting)

The shoes, the shoes! —

Lodge

O Scythian Shepherd, now assume thy Shoes!

Bame (to Benet)

He is a knavish player, as thou dost know.
Speak up for me. I shewed them on their
way,
And they 've not asked my name.

Benet

Stay till they do. —

Marlowe

Dear Mistress Alison, have I your leave
To do my fellows honor? For they crave
To wear their names before you. They have
heard

Of Canterbury days ! (Here Tom, here Tom.)
This is my fellow-student, Thomas Nashe ;
The gentlest soul that ever spitted man
Upon an adder-tongue, — the scourge of vice,
Sleepless protector of all Puritans.

(*Presenting Lodge*)

Step hither, Tom. Here is another Tom,
Tom Lodge, the Second Son of our Lord-
Mayor ;

Our nobly born. This is our Sunday Tom.
A poet, too. And smile upon him, mistress,
Trust me, that smile of yours shall never die
Out of the world. — My good friend, Thomas
Lodge. —

Entreat him kindly, for my sake.

Lodge (aside)

O, Faustus !

Marlowe

And Master Peele, of whom the world relates
A thousand jests he had no knowledge of.
It is the price of his most fertile wit
That every quip, to pass for current coin,
Must stamp it with his name. Come hither,
Robin.

Let me commend to you this gentleman,
Master of Arts, indeed !

Benet (apart)

Of the black arts !

Marlowe

His nature, like his name, o'ergreens whate'er
He looks on, with such pastoral invention
As would enchant your wits and hold you bound
With charms as innocent as ring-me-round ! —
His very name 's a lure to every rhyme.

Bame (to Marlowe)

By all you say, you are great folk to know.
If I were trained a player, I could tell
My worth as aptly.

Marlowe

So? Good Master Barnby,
Here is a friend suspects you have forgot him.
He says — he too has kin in Canterbury.
Do you not know his face? Bethink you, sir.
I heard you speak of mischief by the way,
And one you met thereafter?

Barnby

Ay, so, so (*bewildered*).

There is a look about him —

Marlowe

Richard Bame

His name is. — And that look? — Now might
it be

The man, by chance, who took your purse?

Bame (violently)

The devil!

Benet

Good gentleman —

Lodge (clapping Bame)

Tush man, a foolish jest!

Come, Kit, the hour is on. — You must be going.

On to the play! (*Hastening Marlowe.*)

Gabriel

What play is that?

Lodge

Why, ‘Faustus,’

Kit Marlowe’s tragedy.

Alison

— Is he a poet?

Gabriel

About the scholar who did sell —

Alison

Oh, father,

Oh, father, let us go!

Barnby

No, no, my girl.

Here is no place for us, though Gabriel

Bid his friends find him here.

Gabriel

‘The Bee-Hive,’ sir,
Is never riotous ; bide here and see,
Oh, do not go to-day — sir, Alison !

Marlowe (to Alison)

I ’ll comfort thee full measure for the play.
But stay awhile, I ’ll teach thee my best song,
And ’t is of shepherds and as white as sheep.
This, for the sake of home !

Alison

Do thou remember.

Gabriel

And, Master Marlowe, tell me, what are you ?

Marlowe

Why, sir, I am the man who wrote the play
Of Faustus who did sell him to the Devil !
I am the man, the devil and the soul, —
Good-day to you !

[*Exeunt Playwrights*]

ACT I. SCENE II

SCENE: *The same: evening. — There is now a fire in the chimney-place. — Candle light. The street door is closed. Discovered at rise, DAME BENET and the BOY, at back, counting up scores. ALISON and BAME near the fire.*

Bame

So now you stand assured of me and mine,
Will you go with me soon to see the Fair?
I have as good a right —

Alison

Oh, Master Bame,
Here are no rights! — It is a courtesy.

Bame

You look as if you dreamed.

Alison

Well, it is late.

Enter Jermyn

Jermyn (to Benet)

Harken, is Master Marlowe here?

Benet

Eh, 'Master'?

And 'Marlowe' here and 'Marlowe' there!
— I tell thee

He is grown great thus sudden! — Nay, good
sir,

He is not here as yet. Will you be served!

Jermyn

I come to bid him wait a message here
From one — some one that's never asked to
wait.

Benet

Oh, sir, he should be with you very soon:
He said as much; within the hour, I swear.

[*Exit Jermyn.*]

Bame (to Alison)

Come mistress. Will you find some closer
place?

Here's too much noise if that one be upon us.
'Devil,' — I well believe it; as to 'Scholar'
I am not wise enough to spell out 'Scholar'
From Knave and Roisterer.

Alison

Will you not learn
Rather to use your eyes than to give ear
To what a grudge may say? Indeed, I think
It was a gentle thing for him, a poet,
That he should so entreat our memories,
And we but country-bred!

Bame

Ay, very gentle!

Enter Gabriel Andrew

Alison

Ah, here is Gabriel. Tell me, Gabriel,
Did father find my cousin? — Nay, not yet!

Gabriel

That did he, and he bade me fetch you there
Before 't is darker — if you wish to go.
They are on fire to see you.

Alison

This same night?

Gabriel

He will be back; and if you are not eager,
Or if you should be weary, or if —

Alison

Please,

I will rest here to-day. To-morrow's soon
Enough to see my cousin. I would rest.

Benet (coming down)

Why, so thou shalt. Too many gentlemen
All bowing fit to dizzy a maid's mind!
Come, come, good Master Andrew! She shall
rest

With me to-night. Her father lends her to me,
And he'll return anon. Why, hair o' silk,
But this is rare in London!

Gabriel

That I warrant.

Bame (to Alison)

Since you will wait here, mistress, I will go.
Commend me to your father. It was he
Said you should go with me to see the Fair
To-morrow.

Alison

Then? Will not the next day serve?
And since you know our cousin, Master Bame,
You will know where to find us.

Bame (going)

I will find you.

Alison

Good even. [Turns back to Gabriel.

Bame (to Benet, going)

As to thee, I say, — I say,
Take care. There will be soon no gentle-folk
To pay thy rents, if thou wilt entertain
Such brawlers as were here at noon. Thine ale
Is good, thy cakes are honest, but I'll eat
No more of them if I share board with such!

Benet (incensed)

'Brawlers?' And 'Such,' — and 'Such!' Nay,
I'll be bound —
This is Extravagance! — What, Master Mar-
lowe?

Bame

The devil take him! —

[*About to make his exit, he collides with the playwrights who enter in high feather, Peele, Greene intoxicated, Lodge, Nash, last of all Marlowe.*

Peele (stopping Bame)

What, that Face, that Face! —

Nashe

Stop Face! — ‘Thou hast a look of Canterbury.’

Greene (singing)

Hey, Canterbury!

Sing hey, sing ho!

Be merry, be merry,

With briar and berry,

And down-a-down derry —

Lodge (singing)

And buds in the snow!

And merrily so,

So ho!

[*Exit Bame angrily.*

Nashe

More matter, Tom. This is a bacchanal
For laurelled brows.

(*To Greene.*) Come, Shepherd of black sheep;
Take up thy crook, — thy one of many
crooks —

Greene (seeing Alison)

Don't use me so — before the Shepherdess ;
 She puts me out of favor with myself.
 Go on, go on, let no man interrupt. —
 I am a Master of Arts.

[Exeunt Benet and Alison, left.]

Peele

But will you rime
 ' Zephyr ' with ' heifer ' for a pastoral ?

Greene

Pastoral ? Bah, go to, go to ! — I know.
 I have a sentence for you. ' Even as . . .
 By the pale light of Hesper, Philomel,
 Who singeth while a thorn doth pierce her
 heart ' . . .

Where am I ?

[Exit Gabriel.]

Nashe

— Where ? In Southwark.

Greene

Nay, nay, nay ! —

Where i' the sentence ?

Nashe

Oh, ' Doth pierce her heart. '

Greene

' Heart, that is pierced by the cruel thorn ' —
 Where am I ?

Lodge

In 'The Bee-Hive,' of the Borough.

Greene

Nay, in the period?

Marlowe

Why, 'The cruel thorn!'

Come pluck it out, for pity sake.

Greene

'The thorn,

Which by the light of Hesper, Philomel,

Who singeth' . . .

Nashe

When she singeth! —

Lodge

— Where she is!

So safely home again.

Greene

But where —

Nashe

Lost, lost,

Poor Robin! Hold by me, and when the

Watch

Comes by, he shall to rescue with his lanthorn,

And tell us where we are. [Reënter Benet.

Greene (laughing)

O, Tom, O Tom,

I feel as merry as a madrigal.

Oho! Oh, this would stir you up to laugh,

Could I but get it out! See you not why

They call it madrigal? — It hath a point

To prick your nose upon — a mad — mad —
mad —

[*Benet hastens towards Greene.*
Lodge (to Benet)

Why, this is genius, not intoxication.

Benet

Under my roof? Again? O Master Greene,

You, you! — I could have sworn. Come sir,
be off!

To The Three Tuns, — The Owl, *The Owl's*
the place!

If you'll go down, why to *The Owl* you go;

Ay, low and lower down, and worse and worse,

To a bad end! — It's in your face. I see it.

Greene

To a bad end? No, no.

Benet

It is as sure

As gospel-spelling. Ho, who need be born

With a caul upon her eyes to see the end

Of Such, — of Such! — Out with you!

[*Hurrying him out to the street.*

Nashe

Robin, flit!

Benet (calling after)

To a bad end! —

[*Reënter* Greene.]

Be off!

Greene

O, wait, good woman!

Good Benet, take it back.

Benet

What then?

Greene

The curse.

You did not see it? Nay, the end — the end.

Benet

I will not say a word.

Greene (doggedly)

Nay, I'll not go,

Until you take it back.

Benet

— Saint Ananias!

Will you begone?

Greene

Ah, take it back, good Benet.

Benet

Well, then, I take it back. — Now take thyself.

[*Exit* Greene, *between* Nashe and Peele.]

The crazy-pate!

[*Exit, right.*]

Marlowe (to Lodge)

Good-night.

Lodge

What ails you, Kit?

Here's hospitality, — no ears, no eyes,
Even for that selfsame little country-maid
Who so remembers you!

Marlowe (going up)

Benet, I say —

[*Rouses the Boy, who starts up.*

Is there a word for me? A messenger?

Boy

There was the footman from My Lady —

Marlowe

Hush! —

Boy

Said one desired to see thee, — will be here —

Marlowe

When, when?

Boy

—' Know not.

Marlowe (aside and coming down)

To-night, then, — ay, to-night.

Gods! — What imperial largess! I shall see
her,

See, speak with her, and then . . . I do believe
The world is mine to-day!

Lodge

Well, Tamburlaine,

Give me a word before your chariot
Shall whirl you out of hearing. Tell me now,
Who is 'My Lady — Hush'?

Marlowe

You ask me this?

Lodge

I ask it. Modify thy royal kick,
For sake of old acquaintance.

Marlowe

Jest not, Tom.

It is none else but — *Helen*, the world's joy,
The world's triumphant torment.

Lodge

Ah, heigh-ho!

Marlowe

Hers is the Beauty that hath moved the world,
Since the first woman. Beauty cannot die.
No worm may spoil it. Unto earth it goes,
There to be cherished by the cautious spring,
Close folded in a rose, until the time
Some new imperial spirit comes to earth
Demanding a fair raiment; and the earth
Yields up her robes of vermeil and of snow,
Violet-veinèd, — beautiful as wings,
And so the Woman comes!

Lodge

Heigh-ho ! — A dream.

Marlowe

Immortal, then ! What have we but our
dreams ?

Why, to fetch wisdom out of the Holy Book,
That hath a saying or two, — 't is such as
dreams

Alone, that moths corrupt not. Actions,
deeds, —

Realities you call them, — all are sham.

Tangible dust, true death, most real decay !

The worm can prove them real, — by eating
them !

And then where, where ?

[Touching his own breast.

Is this Kit Marlowe, think you ?

Bah ! I am what I say and what I dream,

Ay, what I dream and dream ! — this fellow,
here,

Is none of me.

*[Alison appears, left, on the threshold steps,
looks down wistfully, then exit, unobserved.*

Lodge

O Faustus, Faustus O !

Thou art far-sighted ; so far sighted, boy,

That thou wilt waste away with longing for
The one lost Pleiad ! In the sad meanwhile
Thou wilt not see what 's nearest to thy nose.
Take it : 't is wisdom. So some Helen smiles
On you ?

Marlowe

To-day ! For all things smile to-day.
I know, I know, fortune may cloud again.
But now the Sun will have his sovereign whim.
One triumph brings another by the hand,
And all the rest come crowding.

Lodge

— For a day !

And she would crown you with a laurel wreath,
In secret ?

Marlowe

Think ! For her to seek me out,
A goddess to a beggar ! Why, my lair
Is more uncertain than a tiger's rest ;
And yet she did not summon me to Court.

Lodge

No. (*Apart.*) And I wonder why !

Marlowe

She speaks with me
Here in the Borough ; sometimes at this place
Whither I come, thou knowest, when I have
more

Than a bad penny! — I would not have her
step

Too near some thresholds I am driven to,
Such as poor Robin haunts.

Lodge

But —

Marlowe

You will ask

Why, then, to-day is more than other days?
Because to-day, 't is true, 't is true, — I won!
'*Faustus*' — is Fame. The people and the
Court

Were all one voice. Ned Alleyn had his
laurels;

And I win mine and wear them. Oh, I knew
Her, through her mask, — and those applaud-
ing hands!

'T is come at last. Even the mongrel ballad
I found this morning, tells me welcomely,
I have attained. — Oh, she shall not confer
All, all, forever. I'll be glorious, —
No beggar poet! She is *Helena*.
Was it a little gift, think you, to say
Such things of woman?

Lodge

So. 'Was this the face' —

Marlowe

*'Was this the Face that launched a thousand
ships*

And burned the topless towers of Ilium !'

Lodge

Sun yourself while ye may, Kit, — sun thyself.
Thou sayest true ; thou art a glorious madman,
Born to consume thyself anon, in ashes,
And rise again to immortality.

Marlowe

The only immortality, of Fame, —
Glory on glory ; of unflinching gaze,
A pride that shall outstare the northern lights.
And when I die ? — An arrow from the Sun !
Oh, if she cease to smile, as thy looks say,
What if ? I shall have drained my splendor down,
To the last flaming drop ! — Then take me,
darkness,

And mirk and mire and black oblivion :
Despairs that raven where no camp-fire is,
Like the wild beasts. I shall be even blessed,
To be so damned.

Lodge

I cannot follow you.

You would be arrogant, boy, you know, in
hell,

And keep the lowest circle to yourself!
So mad are you? — And yet I could have sworn
Your eyes took interest in the little saint
We saw to-day.

Marlowe

The little country shrine?
Why so they did. And therefore she was made.
'T is only she will look with pitying gaze
On me in gorgeous torment. Snowflake pity,
Destined to melt and lose itself in fire,
Or ever it can cool my tongue! Ay, Tom.
I owe the Faith more tribute than I pay,
For its apt figures. Con thy Bible, Tom.
I'm glad they chanced here. I shall think,
sometimes,

Just of her face: the little Quietude,
Standing in shelter, quite immovable,—
And reach my hand up for a tear, a drop
Of holy water from those hands of hers.
She fills the only need was left to me;
And sooth to say, I never thought of it
Before I saw her.

Reënter Alison

Lodge

Look you, there she is.

Marlowe

Ah, cousin Alison!

Alison (on the steps)

Good-even, sir, —

Sirs. But I am not 'Cousin' Alison.

Marlowe

Forgive. I have a longing to make sure
Of anchorage somewhere. You did not see
The play this afternoon? [*She comes down.*

Alison

My father would not.
He should be here by now. He went to see
If he could find our cousin, over Bridge.
I am to stay with her till market's over;
And if she wish, until Midsummer-Day.

[*Lodge retires up and tickles the Boy, who
is dozing, with a rush.*

Marlowe

What can I do to hasten this bare hour,
Or sweeten it for you?

Alison

If you would sing —
The song you promised . . .

Marlowe

She remembers that?
(*To Lodge.*) Come here, you Second Son, and
ply your art.
Boy, where's the lute?

[Boy starts up, takes lute down from the wall and gives it to Lodge. Lodge comes down and they seat themselves near the table, Lodge and Marlowe opposite Alison. Reënter Benet to listen, at back, with drowsy satisfaction.

I showed thee of this air,
Did I not, Tom? Now set me off my verse.
T is called '*The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*,'

And listen to the words, and you shall learn.

[Lodge plays; Alison watches Marlowe artlessly.

Song

'Come live with me, and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountains, yields.

'And we will sit upon the rocks
Seeing the shepherds' —

Enter Barnby

Barnby

Well done, well done now! How is this my
girl?

Too weary — wert thou?

[Coming down, followed by Benet.

But thy cousin's house
Would better feed this cheek with red again.
Am I to know thee for my Alison?
Tired of London? So?

[*Exit Lodge, yawning.*

Marlowe (aside to Benet)

Oh, take him hence.
I shall be going soon. But till I 'm gone —
[*Gives her a coin.*

Benet

Now, Master Barnby, will you see the Inn
And have your comfort?

Marlowe (to Barnby)

Only let her stay

A moment more, until I end the song.

[*Goes up to the street door.*

Barnby

What song is this? Well, tarry if you will.
Be cheery, wench, and pipe up for thyself
And show them how we sing in Canterbury.
Ay, so! Well done.

[*Exit, left, preceded by Benet with a candle-dip. Marlowe opens door, centre, and looks up and down. The Bellman's voice passes chanting.*

Bellman

Hang — out — your lights ! —

[*Marlowe lets the door fall shut and comes down abstractedly towards the lute which Lodge has left on the table. He sits and takes it up. Alison sits, dreamily, on the other side of the table, and listens spell-bound, while Marlowe watches her face.*

Bellman (passing without).

Past — nine — o'clock and a — starlight —
night.

Marlowe (sings)

' *Come live with me, and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountains, yields.*

' *And we will sit upon the rocks
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.*

' *And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle :*

‘ *A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
Fair-lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold.*

• • • • •
‘ *The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning.
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love !*’

[*At the end of the song, she does not move,
but sits looking straight before her, held
by his eyes, as if she were charmed. He
reaches his hand across the table towards
her. She does not move.*

Marlowe

Why, this it is to listen ! — Art thou dreaming ?

Alison (like a child)

I do not know.

Marlowe

And will you not say Thanks ?

Alison

Oh, Master Christopher —

Marlowe

The song went ill ?

Alison

Thou knowest that it did not.

Marlowe (laughing)

Alison,

Sweet friend, thou art so frugal of thy praise!
And yet this song is often paid in honey.

Alison

It is most wonderful.

Marlowe

Then why so still?

Alison

Oh, everything is changed.

Marlowe

Why? Tell me why.

Alison

Indeed, I do not know — I do not know.

I never heard these things. — Thou art a poet.

I never saw a poet — and I wish —

I could know more.

Marlowe (laughing aloud)

You do? And so you shall.

Look, Eve new come to Eden! Well, of
all

New things, thou art the newest new-comer!

Was it the song?

Alison

The song — ay, that, and thee:

And everything.

Marlowe

The song and everything —
Within the song! And what is there, stray
child,

What strangeness? — What but love, as I am
blest, —

Love — love! (*with great enjoyment*).

[*She rises, startled.*

Where are you going, Alison?
What would you know of poets? All things
new!

Gods! For the boon of such a listening ear,
Eager and charmed to listen, such a soul,
Wide as the first, first morning! — Alison,
Poets have need sometimes: I would be
thanked

As only you can thank me. For the Song,
I'll give it to you — (*rising*)

Alison

Wilt thou?

Marlowe

And for that,

Give me a kiss . . .

[*She looks at him with candid amazement.*

Sure, that's a little thing. Our English maids
Give kisses where they will. Do you not so?

Alison

Yes . . .

Marlowe

Why, then, give it me. — You do not know,
But yet I have a fancy that from you
Some charm must come with it, some blessed-
ness,

Such as I have no name for. — Alison.

*[She moves towards him unconsciously, ever
delaying.]*

Are you so frugal? There's the way of maids.
The smallest boon they will deny; but ask
With arrogance, and have what is to have!
Well, I'll be arrogant, to make it dear.

*[Stepping farther away and holding his arms
towards her, where she poises, regarding
him.]*

What are you? Faith, no woman, and no child:
A little Dream that pities not a prayer, —
Will come no nearer tho' the dreamer starve,
For fear a kiss might bind you! — Faith, I
know

You will not stay, Bird-shadow! You will fade,
At the first omen of —

Enter Jermyn, from the street

Jermyn

— Her Ladyship.

[*Exit Jermyn, leaving the door wide. Enter Her Ladyship. Marlowe's arms drop; he turns, brilliant and bewildered, towards the door as Her Ladyship, the upper part of her face masked, advances. — Alison shrinks away, puzzled, regarding them.*

Her Ladyship

Well, 'Faustus,' do you know me?

Marlowe

'*Helena*'!

Her Ladyship

I was in doubt lest I should find you here,
Beset with mad companions, noisy wits,
Such as I saw resorting to thy side
Where thou wert sitting, poet among poets,
But none like thee! — Come, let me hear yet
more;

But no, it must run dry.

Marlowe

No, never, never!

Will you have more?

Her Ladyship

Yes, more of it, more, more!

This is new wine you pour me. I am fired
To know how much your tongue may dare.
You climb

Such dread audacious height. I watch, in terror

To see you fall and dash this god to clay.

More of my music! — I am thirsty now,

I, who have had such words as not the Queen
Ever commanded yet, and knew them mine.

I was thy *Helena*? Thou swearest it? —

Nay, by the rood?

[*Alison slips out, left, into the garden.*
Marlowe.

Thou knowest thou art she.

Her Ladyship (holding off her mask exultantly)

‘Was this the face that launched a thousand
ships!’

More, more! — You’re swift to promise, but,
my Faustus,

You can no more.

Marlowe

Helen, you draw me on
From world to world and whither none can
follow.

’T is you discover to my insatiate mind
Seas, countries, spheres I never dreamed before;

All longing, and the imperious will to be
A glory that shall hold your looks, I swear,

As the Sun compels his flower to turn to
him.

Yes, you shall listen! — Yes, you shall drink
down

Imperial draughts of honey, fire, and dew;
And if you will, my last pale, savage pearl,
To make more precious with unpitied death,
That fearful wine!

Her Ladyship

Are you then so much mine?

Marlowe

Thine and the Sun's!
Light draws me, and I follow. Drink my song.
Grow fair, you sovran flower, with earth and
air;

Sip from the last year's leaves their memories
Of April, May, and June, their summer joy,
Their lure for every nightingale, their long-
ing;

Fill you with rain and sunset; live and thrill,
Whose master-work is only to exist!
Terrible Beauty, that can so enthrall
And bind the service of all elements,
As they were serving-maidens: eyes and mouth,
You give back to the silence of the Earth
Whose treasury you beggar, only silence.

Her Ladyship

— And this.

[She kisses him. Reënter Alison from the garden, unnoticed. Her Ladyship and Marlowe go towards the doorway. Outside appear two link-boys with torches.]

ACT II

SCENE: *Garden of The Bee-Hive three weeks later. — At back a high wall, with a postern-gate, centre, showing a distance with house-tops and trees. — Right, an entrance to the Inn, with steps. Another door below the steps, leading to a cellarage. Left, wall covered with vines. A little to right of centre, in front, a large vine-covered arbor, open, front and back; the sides trellised. Within, a rude table with two benches, another seat outside; upon it a trencher with beans and carrots. Between the arbor and the garden-wall, left, a row of hop-vines trained on poles, planted thickly. Other shrubbery. A bench behind the hop-vines. Summer afternoon.*

Discovered at rise, GABRIEL ANDREW, standing moodily in the entrance of the arbor, as if waiting for some one. Enter, hurriedly, from the Inn, BAME.

Gabriel

WELL, what's to say?
Bame

You know as well as I.
 'T is all of Alison.

Gabriel

I had rather think
 Of Alison to myself than talk with any.

Bame

But will you reason?

Gabriel

Deeply, if I can.

Bame

You know our talk. You saw as well as I,
 How that quill-spoiler cozened you and her,
 And had her eyes and hearing so none else
 In all the town made any sound to her!
 Not you yourself, although you had the right,
 Knowing them well at home; while I was
 strange.

And strange I'm like to stay! And yet I
 paid

Some little service; met them on the way
 And showed them to The Bee-Hive. I can
 name

My kin among the towns-folk that they know.
 I have as good a right —

Gabriel

To wait — to wait.

Bame

Ay, then, to wait ! But wherefore, ask thyself.
Do you not see we are waiting for this Marlowe
To have her up and off and out of reach
Before our eyes ?

Gabriel

That maid is not the maid
To shake from any bough.

Bame

But do you see
How she is altered ever since that day,
And day by day, of late, with watching for him ?

Gabriel

So you have seen her, day by day, of late.

Bame

As well as you.

Gabriel

Marry, as well as I !

H'm, with two daily suitors the poor maid
Should feel her hearing worn. I cannot marvel
That she is pale.

Bame

Ay, she is pale enough.

Yet still she visits with her cousin there,
Week in, week out.

Gabriel (troubled)

I do not grudge her London.
A maid should see the sights.

Bame

And she sees none.
I have entreated her to come with me
To Paul's, to Chepe, to hear the singing-
boys;

And she will stay indoor as if she feared
To lose some jewel, an she left her house.

Gabriel

Ay, doth she so?

Bame

Thou wilt not boast to me
It was *thy* face.

Gabriel (whimsically)

No, no, faith, if I could
I would; but have thy slender satisfaction.
Eke it out with a carrot! — Well, you say
She will not go with you? Nor yet with me.

Bame

Until to-day. To-day! — Ah, listen now! —
I'm on my way to bring her to the Gardens
Yonder, 'to see the shows.'

Gabriel

You shall be proud.

Bame

To see the shows, forsooth ! But until now,
I had begged her to come with me anywhere
Save hither to the Borough.

Gabriel

Well, poor maid,
Must all her joy be bounded north by west ?

Bame

Thou hast my meaning. When I spoke of
this,

She gave me such a smile as I dare vow
Thou never hadst, and promised me to come ;
Begged me to bring her to see Benet here,
That same ' old hostess that was kind to her.'
I go to meet her at the waterside,
Since this is all of London she would see ! —
'T is Marlowe — Marlowe — and thou knowest
well

The maid is pining for him. Ay, by heaven,
Waiting to catch a grain of news, as pigeons
Flutter and flock to peck a lentil up.
She treasures every word that folk let fall
About these players, — covering her ears
To words that mar as true word only can ;
Denying all with shudders ; and sometimes, —
The music that he taught her —

Gabriel

Music? what?

Bame

Oh, I was not far off.

Gabriel

I warrant you

I was; or had I caught you listening,

I would have —

Bame

Save abuses. You shall use them
To better purpose yet. I say the man
Made merry for an hour with charming her,
A hunter, weary of his fowling-piece
Until to-morrow! But the charm has worked.
She dare not breathe till he shall come to say
Breathe so, or so. She lives not in to-day.
I tell you more. He shall not have the girl
An if he wanted her. And yet if not,
I hate him more, that he can spoil the day
So lightly. — And the more for it was he
Made me a butt before you all —

Gabriel

A jest!

No more. What grievance? People of this
part
Are used to rougher jesting.

Bame

You conceal

What you are building.

Gabriel

Under simple thatch!

Bame

Come, you are fair.

Gabriel

Well, then I will speak out.

This is my first thought. My maid is not one
Whose whims or fancies are to be set down
By russet folk. She may think as she will:
I do receive it. I could no more dream
Of climbing up a wall to peer and pry
Into the garden of her mind, than steal
The blossoms from her father's orchard-close
To rob him half a harvest. Go your way,
And I'll go mine. — 'T is all with you, to-day.

Enter from the lower door of the inn, Dame

Benet. *Bame goes to inn-steps and turns.*

Bame

Take thought once more.

Gabriel

I will take thought once more:
And if need be, why once more after that!

[*Exit Bame, right.*

[Benet recovers her carrots and beans, from the bench ; sits down, and prepares them. Gabriel stands against the arbor-trellis beside her, abstracted and gloomy.

Benet

This were a pretty tale now, Master Andrew !
What would The Bee-Hive do without you
then ?

Gabriel

Why, when, dame ?

Benet

Lack ! So far away, are ye ?

Why, when you take to farming once again,
In Canterbury.

Gabriel

Oh, 't is years away —

If I should do so ever. I was dreaming.
'T was hearing of — old Barnby — set my wits
Veering to homeward like a weather-cock.
Tell me, is Master Marlowe hereabout ?

Benet

Until the day is over, who can tell ?
There is no dial for these player-folk
And poets. 'T is all Swallow-while-you-may !
When they are paid, why so am I, betimes.
Then to The Bee-Hive, oh, I warrant ye —

They swarm to me ; for there is no such ale
Brewed nor cakes baken, here in all the Borough ;
And that they know. But when the times will
change,
And they split quills with writing of bad plays
And get scant payment as all such deserve, —
Then to The Merry Friar ; to The Owl ! —
Until your *Owl* will none of them, — so down,
To some I never name.

Gabriel

The tide will turn.

Benet

And peacock moult. 'Ods life ! Such velvet
clothes,
And footmen bringing messages all day
From Lady Here and There. And yet to-morrow,
Gone, like last Mayday, where ? Your peacock
hides
Throughout a moulting season.

Gabriel

But this Marlowe,
He is the best of them ? Come, is he not ?

Benet

Best ? What is best ? This '*Faustus*' paid
his score.

I doubt not 't was a play — but there be plays
Of far more noise than that. He will make
free,

As if he built The Bee-Hive! Now he 'll pay,
And now he 'll owe. He is not given to talk
With me. — I do hear tales of him.

They say

He is a fearsome Atheistical.

Gabriel

Do they say that? Bah, dame! What right
have men

To spread abroad this pestilent They-Say,
And take us with infection ere we know?

I care not for this Marlowe, good or ill;
But yet I have a left-hand, country-bred,
Shuffling affection to a slandered devil; —
Comes of a zeal for driving my own kick
Where my own wit shall aim.

Benet

Ay, ay, now there;

This is discourse.

[*The Boy appears at the lower door.*

Boy

Have ye the lentils ready?

Gabriel

Say, now, is Marlowe like to be about,
To-day?

Benet

Who knows? This moment or next year.

Boy (entering)

She's calling for the lentils. [*Takes trencher.*

Benet

Here, you boy! —

It shall not leave my sight.

Boy (going)

Come after, then!

[*Exit Boy by the lower door, followed by Dame Benet in haste. Gabriel, after a pause, turns decisively and exit by the postern-gate. Immediately after, reënter Bame from the Inn. He pauses on the lowest step, speaking back. Alison appears in the doorway.*

Bame (lagging)

Nay, if I must go back — But blame not me,
If the day goes awry. I did not think
You set such store by our Dame Benet here,
To send me to the stairs again to find
A paltry hood. It was not in my thought,
And so I left it with the waterman; —
But if you made it, 't is another thing.
I will go back. [*Alison comes down the steps.*

Alison

And I will wait for you,

Here.

Bame (sullenly)

— Will you so? I did not know you were
So fond on Benet . . .

Alison

She did much befriend me
The day we came to London. Young as I,
She saith she doth not see us often here;
And so I made that keepsake with all care,
To show her I remembered. Master Bame,
Why will you be so dark with me?

Bame

I 'll go
And find the bargeman. Shall I find you here,
When I come back? 'T is cooler than indoor.

Alison

Sure I will wait.

[*He watches her come down, then exit Bame
hurriedly by way of the Inn.*]

Ah me, but I will wait!

How long, how long, with nothing else to do?
But I am here again. — It cannot seem
The way I saw the threshold that first day,
Before the world began. Why, it was he
Told me I looked a very new-comer,
And laughed, and guessed a little of the truth,
How new it was to me; but yet not all.

(*Beside the arbor.*)

O little vine, I wonder if the first
Long draught of rain when you are budding
first,

May be like that? — The first high noon? I
love you, —

I know not why; I love you. Dear you were
And pleasant to me, ever; but I think

I never saw before. He called me Eve.

I took it for a jest, but now indeed

I think I never lived at all before.

God made me only now! . . .

Oh, here again, —

Again where he is —

[*Noise in the street of laughter and men's
voices. Alison looks from the postern-
gate to the Inn, between fear and delight,
shrinking behind the shrubs and hop-vines.
Marlowe's voice is heard from the unseen
group in the street.*

Oh, not now — not yet! . . .

Yes, listen, listen, listen! — Mother of God!

My prayer is answered, and I cannot stay, —

I cannot stay. [Gate opens.

*Enter Marlowe, speaking back. He shuts the
gate.*

Marlowe

No, no I tell you, no.
This is my hour. — No, no, another time!
Leave me alone.

[*He stretches his arms and comes down indolently. He has a book in his hand. He enters the arbor, and sits; opens the book, pulls a leaf or two from the vine, reads a bit, leaning his arms on the table before him; then shuts his eyes and after a heavy sigh or two, falls asleep.*—Alison, listening in an agony of suspense, peers through the vine-covered lattice, left. She shakes the vine softly and he does not stir. She speaks in a very low voice, with rapturous wistfulness.

Alison

Do you not hear? Praise God, he is asleep.
But I have seen him. — Ah, so you can tire,
Yes, even you. Oh, this is more than I
Could dare to pray for, — that you should be
near

And never see me. She is grown more patient,
This Alison. Ah, if I only knew —
But I do know: I'm walking in a dream.
I saw — I heard. Did I not hear enough?

I 'm nothing: only eyes to watch for you.

I 'm nothing, only silence.

[Sobbing into the vine.

If I dared

To wake you and to ask you what it meant:

Oh, if I only dared to give you — now —

[He stirs, turning his face towards her. She is motionless for a second. But he sleeps.

Why am I such a nothing, with no gift?

I who would keep you guarded if I might,

From all things ill. Oh, if I were the Moon,

How I would shine upon you, brow so dear,

How white your dreams would be —

Oh, guard him well,

For me — for me.

Enter from the Inn, Gabriel Andrew.

Gabriel

Is Master Marlowe there?

[Alison retreats, left, behind the hop-vines.

Alison (apart)

What, Gabriel? Oh, how shall I begone?

Gabriel (coming down)

Heigh-ho! I 've spoiled a dream for you, I see.

Marlowe (waking)

Yes, true enough. Nay, sit. 'Tis not my garden,

Although I lord it, of an afternoon,
In dreams and out of them. A patch of
green
Must serve us for an Eden.

Gabriel

Ay, sometimes.

And yet when I do plant my garden-plot
Of Eden, I would have it further off
From here.

Marlowe

Oho, in Canterbury!

Gabriel (reluctantly)

Ay.

Does your mind go there?

Alison (apart, rapturously)

He remembers all!

*Enter quickly from the Inn, Bame. He comes
down to the arbor and sees only Marlowe and
Gabriel talking. Alison is hidden. He casts
a suspicious glance about.*

Gabriel

Well, Master Richard Bame?

Bame

Give you good-day.

Marlowe

What do you lack?

Bame

Something I lost but now.

[*Exit into the Inn.* Gabriel puzzled.]

Alison (apart)

Alas, poor man, I meant to keep my word,
Indeed.

Marlowe

It is the most aggrievèd devil!

I cannot walk out, of a holiday,

But I must run against his raven-beak

Croaking above some harvest. Hath a grudge

Against me, — what, I know not. Well, your
worm

Must needs be here to make it Holy Eden.

Gabriel

You spoke of home. I wonder now — Wouldst
ever,

If the way came, think to go back again
To live?

Marlowe

My kindred do not yearn for me.

Gabriel

Nay, but perchance if you do yearn to have
The downs again, and all the comely ways
You spoke of; and the cherry orchards too,
As poets may, tho' I know nothing of it! —

That song of shepherds you were bound to
sing,

It will have been a song now, as I guess,
Only for singing; but you cherished it.

Marlowe

What song? ‘*Come live with me, and be my
Love*’?

Marry, you good old homebodies have ears
Of kindlier welcome to a madrigal
Than I dreamed, ever. I remember now.
The little Quietude was full of wonder
Her tongue refused to tell, at that same song.

Gabriel

The little Quietude? —

Marlowe

Your Kentish maid,
The Eva of this Eden, to whom I sang.
She had great eyes — [Alison rapt.

Gabriel (heavily)

— The little Quietude.

Marlowe

And silken hair. She was all made of stuff
Too fine for country wear. I marvel Nature
Who plans such ruddy milk-maids, should have
set

A hand to make that lonely masterpiece

Among the hop-fields. Why, she was a maid
Of crystalline ! If you looked near enough,
You 'd see the wonder changing in her eyes
Like parti-colored marvels in a brook,
Bright through the clearness !

Gabriel

— Ay, 't is Alison ;
As like as if you saw her, to read off
What 's in her face. Now I could never say.

Marlowe

And do you see her, now ?

Gabriel (dully)

She hath a cousin
Over in Cherry Lane — and —

Alison (apart, hidden in the shrubs)

Gabriel dear !

Marlowe

Oh, 't is the cousin, then ! Ay, trust a man
Bred in the fields to lose his wit in London,
And take up with some painted city-madam
Would give her hope of a celestial throne
For that swan-quiet, and the morning gaze !
Heigh-ho, you farmers, living face to face
With the untarnished loveliness of Earth
And with no eyes to see it ! Sullen red
Of sunset and dove-plumage of the dawn

Are weather, weather, weather! — and the
Wind

That bloweth where it listeth — ha, brave
Wind!

Muzzle it, would you? — lest it should make
free

With the young orchards! Why, for this same
maid,

Her name might be —

[She listens rapturously, nearer and nearer.

Gabriel

— The little Quietude.

But you should see her sometimes when she
laughs.

'T is like — I cannot say. Well, you can say
Whatever comes to mind, and more, belike.

Marlowe

I could do honor to Her Quietude
Till song run dry!

Gabriel

— So then. You love her?

[Alison stands with her eyes shut.

Marlowe

Love?

Gabriel

Marlowe

Do I love her ?

Gabriel

Is it Yea or Nay ?

[*Marlowe laughs long.*

Marlowe

Come, tell me ; do you love the Evening Star ?
But that 's a riddle, man. — I know to thee
It is a timely taper, lighted high
Before the curfew bell !

Gabriel (fighting off his relief)

You love her not ?

Well, then. I know not why I talk so long
Of all these things apart. I was but think-
ing ;

You spoke of home, and you can see her face
And talk of it such wise, I thought — may-
hap, —

They being my neighbors there at home, I
thought —

If 't were your mind to take up life again
And have our maid to share it — if it were,
I might so do you service — speak a word,
Seeing I know her father.

Alison (apart)

— Gabriel !

Gabriel

And as you mind, at home your quality
Are held in less esteem than —

[*Marlowe still laughs.*

Alison (apart)

Gabriel ! —

Marlowe

Come, is it I ? — Good sooth ! I tell thee, man,
I like thee ; come !

Gabriel (rising)

What laughter is in this ?

Marlowe

None, none, but all in me ! Nay, come sit
down.

[*He leaves the arbor, and goes to the steps
of the Inn to call.*

Hey, there, — bring out a tankard.

[*Returns, and continues to move up and
down, talking animatedly, while Alison
is driven back to her hiding-place. It is
now sunset.*

Come, give ear,

And I will teach thee a philosophy
Shall save thee many a making of thy mind,
To ravel out thereafter. I'll be plain.
I asked thee, would one love the Evening Star ?

To thee it was a riddle. Listen, then:
What is all Love but *I-Will-Have, Will-Have!*
What I must have, — I love. And I will have
it.

But for the Evening Star, I have it, there.
[*Pointing to the sky.*]

I would not have it nearer. Is that Love,
As thou dost understand? — Yet is it mine
As I would have it: to look down on me,
Not loving and not cruel; to be bright,
Out of my reach; to lighten me the dark
When I lift eyes to see, and in the day
To be forgotten. — But of all things, far!
Far-off, beyond me, else it were no star.

Gabriel

Ay, that's a star. A woman, then —

Marlowe

A woman?

A woman must be near, to be a Woman!
Dreams change their color as they leave the
stars

For this engrossing air that folds the world.
The birds fly lower, lower, to a nest;
The small uncounted brightnesses, that fleck
The thwarted sunbeam with such lively gold,
Settle into a kindly earth again, —

The dust that men are made of! Glory close,
 Love near at hand? — Must-Have, Will-Have,
 indeed!

World beauty not to dream of but to hold, —
 Woman! What else?

Gabriel

And wilt thou love no woman?
 They say not so of thee.

Marlowe

Oh, leave 'They Say'!

I serve a lady so imperial fair,
 June paled when she was born. Indeed no
 star,

No dream, no distance, but a very woman
 Wise with the argent wisdom of the Snake;
 Fair nurtured with that old forbidden fruit
 That thou hast heard of. It was made for her,
 Oh, and she eats thereof and lives forever!
 And what she is and breathes, that Will I
 Have;

Yes, — though the fruit were twenty times for-
 bidden,

Yes, by a God who should walk here and
 now, —

Here in the garden in the cool of the day,
 Yes! — I would eat, and have all human joy,
 And know — and know.

My kingdom of the air,
I have it : spaces where no thought may rest,
Unfooted heaven lighted by lone stars,
And gulf on gulf of dark. But here is Earth ;
And Earth I will have too, and we will leave
The garden - place together, under the
Frown! —

And smiling back upon the flaming sword,
Out of the closure. — Love! —

*[Stir in the Inn, and voices. Gabriel ready
to leave the arbor. Alison behind the
vines, exhausted.]*

Alison

Ah, God forgive this pitiful eaves-dropper! —
I am so much the wiser. Let me go,
Home.

*Enter from the Inn, the playwrights, Nashe and
Lodge, followed by the Boy with a tankard,
and Peele carrying the cups.*

Gabriel (going)

Well, I will bid you —

Nashe (meeting him)

Whither away so fast?

Who pays the score?

Lodge

Come, come, our old friend Andrew!

[*The two conduct Gabriel back to the arbor.
Alison looks for some way of escape and
returns to her hiding-place. Boy sets down
tankard and exit.*

Nashe

Face it out with us! If we go alone,
Kit, here, will pelt us with his dithyrambs.
Know you these dithyrambs? 'Tis a green
plum

Sweet in the mouth, but in the belly bitter,
Like the little book within the little Book
Our pious Kit doth swear by.

Lodge

You shall drink
God-speed to me! I go upon a voyage.

Peele

Alas, dear Tom, now after all this going —

Nashe

At last he goes. And we, a year in wait
Drinking Farewell and Yet-again-good-bye!
And more Godspeed, and so Your-safe-re-
turn! —

But now it seems he's going.

Marlowe

Where is Robin?

[*A cuckoo-call from the street.*

Lodge

Ask not, Discretion. Nay, it cannot be.

O hardy Robin, even under ban!

[Greene climbs over the postern-gate and comes down cautiously.]

Greene

Is my sweet Hostess there? Or doth she dream

Within, and dream of me? — Bah, what is she?

I'm a new man. Go tell her with my scorns,

I'm at The Mermaid.

Nashe

Liest, — Robin Redhead!

'Tis a good twelve-month since The Mermaid saw thee.

Greene

Tell her The Mermaid hath such company,

I never show my head there, when my wits

Are rusty. Then I burrow in The Bee-Hive,

A dull, safe place! And tell her that my wits

Are damaged by the quality of her ale. —

Once was I the salt of wit. But now ye see

I'm damaged. Fellows all, say if I be not?

Peele

Ay, ay, good Robin.

Lodge

So thou art.

Peele

Come, come.

[*He pours the ale at the arbor table, singing carelessly. Mariowe sits to left of the table, Gabriel beside him; Lodge outside, with his back towards the vines; Nashe within the arbor. Greene comes down to the bench just outside the arbor.*

Peele (singing).

If you have a heart, you break it;
Have a purse, a knave will take it.

Therefore wise men all beware!
Save your head, but nothing in it,
Spend an hour and waste a minute:

Nothing have, and have no care.
Nothing keep, for there's a plenty!
Fill the bowl, but drink it empty.

Hey, lo-lo! Sing Nothing with a Naught!
When I was born, 't was Nothing I brought.
And when I leave this world of thought,
May the devil take me if I take aught!

[*Under cover of the noise, Alison tries to steal out. It is twilight. But Greene hears the leaves shake, and catches a glimpse of her behind the vines. She re-*

treats in haste and clings there, quiet and watchful.

Greene

Soft, soft !

[He begins to sing romantically, accompanying himself upon an imaginary lute, and keeping an eye on the vines.

(Singing.)

Her cheek is hawthorn and her voice the rain ;
Her eyes are window lights that never wane,
So morning-clear.

Alas, dear April, when she comes again,
Shall I be here ?

Marlowe

He 's mad, poor Robin !

Greene

— 'Sh ! Don't startle her.

(Singing.)

For she is kind as all the fields are fain,
And she will cheer the grass with sun and rain,
And cowslips dear.

Alas, sweet April, when they spring again,
Shall I be here ?

Soft — soft —

Marlowe

What do you see ?

Greene (boisterously)

A farthingale !

[*Laughter.* Gabriel starts and takes thought.

Lodge

This is The Bee-Hive, Robin, — you should know !

Peele

— Where ? Where ?

Greene

What is a hive without a queen ?

Come all, — a serenade ! — Each man his own.

[*In great good spirits, but not noisily, they burst into song, each man his own melody, making a cheerful tangle of noises. Gabriel moves cautiously towards the front of the arbor.*

Marlowe (singing)

‘ Come live with me, and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods or steepy mountains, yields.

‘ And we will sit upon the rocks
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.’

Nashe (singing)

O let me win some warmth within,
And then I will be merry,
For Grief is but a chilly thief
Grows fat in February.
Hey, hey! Ho-ho!
'T was ever so,
Since Adam ate the cherry.

Lodge (singing)

With 'But' and 'But' and good 'What-if'
I still make shift to tarry.
The man who cannot cheer him so,
Oh, let him go drown or marry!

Greene (singing)

Hey, merry maid!
Leave your lattice window, pretty;
Sure to hide you were a pity.
Never be afraid.

Look forth and see
Who it is that comes to borrow.
Never wait until to-morrow;

Come and kiss — me!

[*During this mingled singing, Gabriel comes
down close to Alison. She starts back.*]

Gabriel (with compassion)

Stay — stay ! 'T is only Gabriel. —

Alison (faintly)

Ask me not —

Gabriel

I will ask nothing, sweet.

Alison

No, Gabriel, no !

Gabriel

Dear child, come home, — come home.

[Behind the vines, he disposes her scarf about her face ; steps forth from the shrubbery and turns toward the postern-gate. The playwrights leave their seats, amazed utterly.]

Peele

— Now, here was shyness !

Nashe

The country-man ? O moral upside down !

Greene (calling)

Stop, Angel Gabriel ! Stop, disciple Andrew !

Only a word to ease my mind, — one word !

Was it thy sweetheart ?

Gabriel (turning, between Alison and the playwrights)

Ay.

[Exeunt Gabriel and Alison by the gate.]

Marlowe

Who was the girl?

You saw her face? — Well, by the shooting-
stars!

Nashe

Sweet opportunity, she passeth by.

Lodge

Oh, the lost Pleiad!

Greene (singing with the others)

‘When she comes again,
Shall I be here?’

ACT III

SCENE: *A tavern in Deptford. — A lapse of three years between Acts II. and III. — It is a shabby interior, with scores scrawled in chalk upon smoky walls and wainscot. — Doorway centre giving on the street. From right to centre at back, the corner of the room is cut off in a series of casement windows, all open, showing a bench outside against the inn wall; and a distance. Beside this casement, a table and a seat. Books on the table, ink-horn and quills. — Left, up, door leading into tap-room. Against the wall, other tables with draught-boards, etc. — It is afternoon.*

Discovered at rise, LODGE, looking bronzed and somewhat older, on the threshold. He enters, looks about, peers out of the casement, sees and tries the quills; opens a book; smiles and turns a few pages.

Lodge

HIS. They were right: he must be here.
[*Calling.*
Holà!

Enter from the tap-room, Richard Bame; on seeing Lodge, he pauses and makes as if to go off again.

Eh, not mine host? Stay, do I know thy face?

[*Bame faces him.*

Why, surely, — Richard Bame.

Bame (with constraint)

Ay, Richard Bame.

You are home again.

Lodge

After a sorry voyage,
To a worse home-coming. Nothing but the
plague! —

The sickness widens round our city-haunts
Like rings around a pebble. They do tell me
There 's scarce a player to be found in London.

Bame

Ay, they are out of work, the feathered ones!
And we that have no feathers, — out of work.

Lodge

Drowned out by all this tolling of the bells —

Bame

And pageants of the dead men.

Lodge (turning to the casement)

Here 's fresh air ! —

And Marlowe 's here? Odd chance. I never
used

To look for him but you were thereabout,
You, who mislike all players and all poets !

[Looking out of the casement.

Bame

I like — to hear him talk. *[Between his teeth.*

Lodge

— And Canterbury ?

Enter Host.

Bame

There is no news of late. I come to-day
Looking to meet old Barnby when he passes.
Deptford is come to be the market now
For South o' London.

Host

Ay, the countrymen

Cannot go nearer to the city folk.

They sell their poultry in the open fields

Here, while the sickness rages. Ay, fat times

For Deptford, — if our dock yards were not full

O' journeymen and sailors out o' work.

These were fat times for Deptford! Still, —
no shows,
No wandering singers now, no plays, no bait-
ings.
'Prentices, players, all with naught to do,
And seamen roving free! Your rope-makers,
Idle all day . . .

*Enter Jermyn, from the street. Bame makes
him a sign to keep silence. He enters and
comes down to meet Bame. Host leads
Lodge towards doorway, while Bame and
Jermyn stand watching them out of the way.*

Lodge

I will wait here awhile
For Master Marlowe. Know you not the
name?

Host (cautiously)

There be some fellow — of some name like
this —

Is wont to come here of an afternoon
And sit there by the lattice, gazing out.
'Oweth me much. But I do let him sit
Freely, for nothing, an he will be quiet.

[*Lodge looks at him in bewilderment, then
goes to the doorway and steps out. Host
follows to discourse with apparent anxiety.
They talk apart just outside the door.*

Fermyn (to Bame)

It is her Ladyship would have me say
She is beholden to your evidence,
For all the court ; altho' they do not know.
But this will have him barred from the Queen's
Players.

My Lady bids me have you greatly thanked
For your true zeal — against this atheist —
And sends you here — [*Holding out a purse.*

Bame (pushing it away)

No, no ! I'll none of it.

Fermyn

Not as a price ; yet for thy pains to follow,
And keep close track on all his blasphemies.
Thou hast the paper setting forth the same ?
Give it to me. — The man is dangerous.

[*Bame produces a document from his coat.*

And this same writ may serve to stop his
mouth,

Another day ! Give me the writ. So. Wit-
nessed ? [*Reads.*

' *A Note containing the Opinion of
Christopher Marlowe* ' —

Bame

Silence ! — Come apart.

It is to keep —

Jermyn

Until the time be ripe.

— ‘That he persuadeth men to atheism’ —

[*Glances through it.*

And thou wilt swear that thou hast heard it all?

Bame

Day in, day out, from his own lips I have it,
Over his meat and drink with other men. —
Sworn, laughed, and sung! There’s nothing
out of reach

To make them bow, — there’s nothing left
too high!

But the created Earth, and God that made,
Are level with the laughter and the dregs.

Jermyn (still reading)

And you will testify?

Bame

Take it! — have done. [Exit Jermyn, left.

Reënter Host and Lodge

Host (pointing through casement)

Look, there he comes.

*Lodge (boyishly, standing away from the casement,
with his back to Bame).*

He knows not I am here! —

[Bame watches the casement for a moment,
clenching his hands with bitter exultation,

then exit noiselessly into tap-room. Marlowe appears outside the window, walking slowly. He is greatly altered, haggard, pale, somewhat shabby. The Host lingers, curiously.

Enter Marlowe. With the same unseeing abstraction, he passes Lodge, goes to the chair by the casement, sits down, and looks out as if watching for something.

Lodge

Kit! — Art asleep, man? — Hast no word for me?

Marlowe (after looking at him)

Ay, is it Tom? I had thought it was some trick

Of fancy; or thy ghost. — So, is it Tom?

Lodge (clapping him, vexedly)

I have a mind to wake thee in good sooth! —

I am just landed these few days ago, —

After the seven plagues, — to one plague more;

And here's a welcome! — Here's a cheek, an eye,

A humor! Do I know thee? Is it thou?

Marlowe

Eyes? Worn with watching. Cheek, indifferent lean.

Humor? Time wears. You should know
that, explorer.

You find us, Second Son, in moulting season.

Talk not of me. — But you —

[*Exit* Host.

Lodge

But all of us!

Where 's Dekker now?

Marlowe

Redeemed again, last week;

Dick Henslowe paid. So, while the sickness
wears,

He 's patching plays to earn some wherewithal
To patch a doublet!

Lodge

Ay, old Tom. And Ben?

Marlowe

Married.

Lodge

There 's Ben! And is there news of Will —

Marlowe

I know not. He is come to print of late

With a sometime poem, '*Venus and Adonis*.'

Nashe? gnashing with his teeth! — but you
have heard.

And now our Lyly languisheth.

Lodge

And Greene. —

Alas, poor Robin !

Marlowe

Ay, you well may say,
 Poor Robin ! But for pity of his end,
 I could still rate him for the pious stuff
 He wrote a-dying ! — Had he saved his breath,
 He had made it last the longer ! Bah, let
 be.

He's dead, poor Robin. — Dead of nothing-
 ness,

And the ten thousand follies. End the drone.

He was a Poet, as the mire can tell.

And the poor keeper of that uttermost den
 Did honor to his wreck as beggars may,
 And crowned him with a laurel. Thankless
 brow

Of death, that could not feel ! — But it was
 there.

[*Looks out of the casement again.*

Lodge

What dost thou see there, Kit ?

Marlowe

Why, dust, Tom, dust.

Lodge

Kit, I had something I would say to thee,
But thou art in no mood to hear it now.
I'll to the dock, and I will come again —

Marlowe (rising)

When I have cast my shell? Nay, — nay, go
not.

Thy news was nothing good. So much I know.

Lodge

There have been foolish rumors in my ears,
Even in these few days, — some old wives' tale
Of painted devils; yet these frighten some!
Why wilt thou mar thine image?

Marlowe (impatiently)

Is it marred?

Along then, with the rest!

Lodge

You know me better.

*Enter from street, Rowse a sailor, and several
Taverners. They go into the tap-room. The
open door lets in some noise of roistering. — A
jangle of horses' bells is heard approaching.
Marlowe points to the bench outside the
window. Exeunt Marlowe with Lodge,
centre. They are seen to pass the window and*

to sit talking without, as the inn-yard noises increase. Reënter from tap-room Host, and exit, centre. After him Bame in haste. Enter from street, old Barnby, dusting off his frock.

Barnby

Well, Master Richard, I was nigh to miss you !
I 'm homeward bound. — Ay, home 's the
happier
After those borders. — Eh? No sickly air
With us, sir !

Bame

True enough. I have a mind
To go along with you, may-hap —

Barnby (troubled)

Ay, so?

Bame

What tidings? There will be some? — Tell
me, sir.

Barnby

Tidings enow. 'T is tidings bid me stop.
I would not have ye come by all the news
Through any other man. Well, clap my hand
And take it manly. Thou wilt wish her joy.
Our Alison is wed. A month ago,
On Easter Monday; Alison is wed . . .

Ay, Gabriel wins ; and thou wilt wish him well.
So, so. I know thou 'st counted on the lass,
And many another man. — A month ago.

Bame (wildly to himself)

So it was all for nothing ! — All for nothing !

Barnby

Take it not thus.

Bame

For nothing — nothing — nothing !

Barnby

I marvel ye had patience to hold out
This good three year. — A maid like Alison
To wear me out three harvest-times and sigh,
A-making of her mind ! But she is wed,
And happily ; and thou wilt wish them well,
Like every honest man. There be not many
Such as our Alison ! — Nay, nay, there be !
The fields are full of them, — no downcast
looks.

There be a score o' wenches still in Kent
As good as — mark, in Kent — no other place ;
And we will have thee wed.

Bame

— Talk not of that.

Barnby

Come out and drink a pot of ale to them.

Bame

Another day. Prithee go see the host. —
Farewell.

Barnby

Ay, ay, now. Take it manly, lad.
[*Backing away with an anxious eye on*
Bame.]

Reënter Lodge and Marlowe. Exit Barnby,
centre. Bame, turning suddenly, sees the
two men.

Bame

So. You have heard it all.

Lodge (gloomily)

O man, man, man!
There be some things to listen to, beside
Thee and thy business.

Bame

Do not put me by;
I say he heard.

Marlowe

Heard what? — And if, what then?

Bame (fiercely)

Why, the wheel turns, and it shall grind thee
too! —
Thou wilt not have her.

[*Marlowe looks at Lodge.*]

Lodge

Peace. The fellow's mad.

Bad news has turned his brain.

Bame

Stand off from him.

No feigning now! — ye heard it all. She's
wed

To Gabriel Andrew — wed to him — at last,
Through thee, through thee.

Marlowe

What is all this to me?

Bame

It shall be something yet. I saw thee first,
Ay, from the first day when you cheated them
With tales of old acquaintance, and made fond,
And charmed the eyes of her, and took her
heart,

But for a whim. — Oh, I was not far off!
Tho' you had made me a butt before them all,
And turned her favor from the laughing-stock.
Nothing to you it was! — All other folk, —
Their homes, so many ant-hills! — All the
world

A show for you, a cheaper show than yours; —
A pageant wagon, — with the people, here,
And overhead, their angels and their God,

Another show ! — And you to laugh at all.
Laugh, laugh ! Whatever 't was, 't is all gone
by,
Never to laugh at more.

But I can tell you,
Oh, I can tell you, now it is too late,
That she was pining for you. — Now she's
wed.

Alison's gone ! You will not have her now.
Ah, now you are no more to her than I !

[*Murmuring.*

The spell is broken. She would see you now
But what you are — a strolling devilry,
A knave and a blasphemer, Atheist !

Marlowe

The fellow's mad. But mad-men should be
bound.

Call me what names your rage will foam in,
fool,

But never cut me with that lash of spite
The pious use ! 'T were much to thy discredit.
Be thy poor venom, venom. Hate and hate ! —
Seek not to find a reason.

[*Bame staggers to the door of the tap-room
and exit.*

— 'Atheist'

While such do name me so, I wear the name
As proudly as an honor. — ‘Atheist.’

Lodge

Ah, Kit, too many hands have got this lash
Against thee. Here it is, to bear me out.
The common voice is risen. Thou canst hear
In that man-hunting tumult, every threat,
From the indignant cry of simple folk
Stung by thy jesting, even to the hiss
Of a trodden worm. But now, forbidden, —
barred

From the Queen’s Players! —

Marlowe

So I am turned out.

Lodge

Out of the Court, thou seest, with all disfavor.
How did it go so far?

[Marlowe *shrugs his shoulders, looking out
of the window.*

I beg thee, listen.

What now? More dust?

Marlowe

Ay, dust turned into woman.

[Her Ladyship *is seen to pass the casement.*

— ‘My Lady Hush.’ — Go not. It is soon
over.

[Lodge falls back. Marlowe comes down, step by step, half turning his face to the door as if he were drawing some one after him. Her Ladyship appears in the doorway with a falcon on her wrist, and a riding-mask in the other hand. On the instant Lodge slips out of the casement, right, into the court, and disappears.

Marlowe faces the doorway squarely. —

Enter Her Ladyship: she blows a little silver whistle. Enter Jermyn.

Her Ladyship (to Jermyn, holding forth the falcon)

Take her; and see thou make the jess secure.

'T was basely mended. Bring it to me here,
And speedily. [Exit Jermyn, left.

[Her Ladyship comes down a step or two towards Marlowe.

I would not have you think that I am come
In answer to a summons.

Marlowe

No indeed!

Her Ladyship

I have been slow to teach you as I should;
Trying the tedious way of silence.

Marlowe

Ay,

Most tedious ! But I would not understand.

Her Ladyship

And since your importunity would still
Beat at the gate, nor take no word from reason,
Last, I have come as you demanded of me.
Demanded, sooth ! —

Marlowe

Forgive the violence
Of a charlatan who doubts his art at length,
Reluctant Helena !

Her Ladyship

No more of this.

Your fantasy outwears the day of welcome ;
And you are grown too arrogant. You own
No height above your own vain-glorious spirit
That threatens everything. It is too plain, —
Your climbing blasphemy.

Marlowe

Ay, let me hear.

Is this the charge against me from your
lips ? —

Why I am barred ? — And I have wounded you
This long time with my godless pride of
thought ! —

I am thus slow to take it for my eyes
 Detected not your suffering loyalty
 To the true Faith.

Her Ladyship

Be bitter, if you must.
 I would have warned you, but 't is late to warn.
 Take a last word : come not about the Court.
 Your reasonings are known there ; they are
 known —

Marlowe

To the Queen's Players. *[She starts.]*
 So : keep from the Court.
 My reasonings are known. — I am in danger.
 You come to warn me of it ?

Her Ladyship

You have heard.

Marlowe

Why do you fear me ?

Her Ladyship

Nay, I fear you not.

Marlowe

Why do you fear the world ?

Her Ladyship

I fear it not.

Marlowe

No, no ? The world nor me ? Then why no:
 say,

'T is all because you love me not? — Because
Now you would have me hence? —

O Helena,

How cheaply at the last you sell your God!
Thirty pieces of silver, I had sworn
Would be too little! Ah, but not for you.
Not even with a kiss, but with a lie,
You shew me how you rate Him, — all of
you!

I waited for the reason. There had been
A chance to make you glorious with some
truth,

And me to blink at unaccustomed gold:
A brave '*I love you not, — I wish you gone!*' —
Such valor of the devil as he respects!

But this poor coinage of an outcast metal,
Stamped with God's image! Ha, deny Him, I?
What have I seen of Him that I should know
Where He is or is not? I have searched the
mire

And found Him not, indeed; and for such
temples

As Holy Writ would have it that He dwells in,
Look you, how cold and empty! — Cold, not
pure.

No flame of heaven or hell, — no fire at all.

[She shrinks backward. He follows step by step.]

Deny Him, I? And thou, dost thou affirm? —

Living denial! — Gentle blasphemy!

[She lifts her riding-mask to her face: he catches it from her and holds it aloft.]

Will you begone? Nay, hear my parting word.

Unmask you, Helen. — Truly you must go

The way of dreams. Will you believe you live?

No, no, I think not, no indeed, not you!

The fire burns out and leaves the ashes there,

The cock crows and the spirits must begone.

I took you for a Woman, thing of dust, —

I — I who showed you first what you might be!

But see now, you were hollow all the time,

A piece of magic. Now the air blows in,

And you are gone in ashes. Well, begone!

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust! — Nay, go.

[He flings the mask across the room. Her Ladyship before the threshold watches him a second, then blows the little silver whistle.]

Reënter Jermyn with the falcon. They look at each other

Jermyn

I have the jesses mended.

Her Ladyship (suavely)

. . . And the Writ?

[*Exeunt Her Ladyship and Jermyn.*

[*Lodge reappears at casement, peers after them, then enters by the window and hastens toward Marlowe. Seeing the mask, he picks it up.*

Lodge

Stay, what is here? Shall I go after her?

Marlowe

There's nothing to go after. 'T is a mask;
All that is left of something that did seem
A most rare woman. — Remnant of black art,
O riddle of the world!

(*Taking the mask.*) Behold her here.

Behold, the place for eyes to beckon through;
Here the red mouth that spoke reproaches to
me,

Yes, in behalf of God! — Consider, look;
'T was this that would convert me. Small and
black;

The headsman wears another.

[*Flings it away.*

Lodge

'T is over, then? Thou dost not love her?

Marlowe

No.

Lodge

Nor for this long time?

Marlowe

No.

Lodge

Nor ever?

Marlowe

— No!

Lodge

Then break my soul if I may understand! —

Art thou the man to fall into despair

Over some lie, some game of hide-and-seek

This Madam plays? Nay, tell me; there is
more.*Marlowe*

More, is there? What?

Lodge

— Never tell me these buffets

Of a poor harvest, or a heavy rain,

Dismay thee, arrogant devil of us all!

But here I find thee, Kit, inscrutable

In thy torn splendors.

Marlowe

H'm! Torn splendors, are they?

Torn splendors, — 't is a phrase ; and gorgeous
threadbare ;

Fine ruin. Well ?

Lodge

Speak out. There is yet more.

Never tell me a woman's falsity

Comes like a thunder-clap at this late day.

Marlowe

It was not the one woman. It was all.

She meant the world, — the world.

Lodge (eagerly)

Well, there's the sky !

Whip up the horses of the Sun ; be bold.

There's thy dominion. What hast thou to do

With tangibles ? — I quote thee to thyself.

Whatever is or is not on the ground,

Make to thyself some image of the air.

Thou art a master-architect. Come, come ! —

Thou, who couldst speak for '*Faustus*,' in the
play,

Such longings fit to turn a Prodigal,

As if thy soul were homesick after God !

Marlowe

— As if ! —

Lodge

I say, what matters it to thee ?

Thine own philosophy, thy fame —

Marlowe

Fame, fame?

Forbidden the Queen's Players? — Hounded
outBy a Court scandal? Nay, hands off the
sun!Drone holy, poet, drone or hold thy tongue;
Will it not lie? — Be off then, atheist!*Lodge*

This is not like thee.

Marlowe (restlessly)

— Bah, the plague's about!

Here you may see Belshazzar at his feast.

[With a grand gesture indicating the tavern.

Nor do we lack our writing on the wall,

Traced in a fiery hand.

*[He picks up a piece of chalk from a gaming-
table and scrawls some figures on the wain-
scot.*

So, Mene — Mene —

Tekel — Upharsin. — Being interpreted,

Nine pounds, three shillings, tuppence on the
score!*[He comes down, abstractedly tossing the
piece of chalk.*

What is there left? Give the poor worm its triumph.

I will go back to Sodom.

Lodge (laughing)

Not for this!

Man, man, what is it now that thou Must-
Have,

Having had all? — I tell thee thou art sour'd
To hear the little country-maid is wed,
As the poor devil clamored in thine ears!

Marlowe

So she is wed.

Lodge

And therefore safe and precious.
Come, think upon a far removèd fairness
That is not thine; and bring dead beauty back.

Marlowe

Dead beauty. Nay, the plague hath every-
thing.

Lodge

The plague hath thee! I swear thou shalt not
spread

Infection so: come here and take thy mark.

[*He catches the bit of chalk, then scores a
cross heavily on Marlowe's breast, laugh-
ing.*]

Here is a warning for good honest folk. —
 The man is stricken. — ‘Lord Have Mercy
 • Upon Us!’

Nay . . .

[Marlowe moves away from him, staring
fiercely.

Marlowe (in a low voice)

— Wilt thou open that raw curse? — Hands
 off!

Lodge

What hath —

Marlowe

— Hands off.

Lodge

I hurt —

Marlowe

Hands off, I say!

[*Rubbing the mark.*

It will not out — it will not out? So, so.

Stay then, and every devil may come to hear,
 And heaven may have its laugh! —

I ever speak

As if there were a Something there to listen:
 The shadow of the little mind, grotesque,
 Confident, helpless, thrown upon the clouds
 To serve him for a god. And I have sworn
 There is no God.

— Ah, but there should be one !
There should be one. And there 's the bitter-
ness

Of this unending torture-place for men ;
For the proud soul who craves a Perfectness
That might out-wear the rotting of all things
Rooted in earth, that bloom so piercing fair
A little while, a little while, — O God,
The little while ! . . .

No, something, something perfect, man or
beast !

What is it all, without ? — And what 's a man ?
To go a blind way seeking here and there,
Spending and spending for the Beautiful,
On shams and shows, and clay that worms de-
vour ;

Banquet of famine, till all 's gone, all 's gone ;
And he is fain to fill that tortured craving
With husks the swine do eat.

— Almighty Void !

And there is nothing there for me to curse,
In this despair.

I tell thee, I have come
Unto a horror no man dreams upon.
Nothing is left and nothing is, to curse.

For you may hear the crying of the wind,
Crying despair and darkness round the earth,
Without a hope of rest. But who has caught
That torturer by the gray, ancient locks,
Or who can stab the wind?

Hast ever thought
Of the thirst of hatred with no thing to hate?
Here, here behold me with my enemy! —
The Void.

Lodge (sadly)
I have no answer for you.

Marlowe

No.

None; there is none.

Reënter Bame from the tap-room, in a daze.

There is no pilgrimage;
No answer and no healing, and no hope.
How simple, if there were a shrine for me
Beyond some journey; as the pilgrims went,
So late, to Canterbury! — But for me
There is no shrine.

Bame (coming down)

Thou shalt not think of that.
Thou shalt not go, I tell thee.

Lodge

Peace! — Go where?

Who talks of going?

Bame (cunningly)

Nay, I am not fooled.

He thinks to go to Canterbury now,
Now that it is too late. 'The shrine,' saith he!
Oh, that would be a jest; but I will warn
them . . .

Pilgrimage, pilgrimage! Eh, denier of God?
Thou shalt not go.

Marlowe

What's this I shall not do?

Bame

Thou shalt not find her. [Exit.

Marlowe

Shall I not, in faith!

Mad-men have wit. — There's one thing left
to see, —

The little Shrine. We called her that. — Tom
Lodge,

Dost thou remember her? — The clearest eyes
I ever looked into; nay, the first eyes
I ever saw deep down unto the well!

And what was that he babbled of her first, —
That she was mindful of me? — [It is sunset.

Lodge

Ay, come, come.

There is some virtue breathing in the world.

Give up your dark dreams, all, unto their
grave.

Look not upon them now ; but tell yourself
You hail the summons of ' Bring-out-your-
dead,'

And leave a piteous burthen. — Pluck up
heart !

Here's the free air, and sunset and the May :
Fill you with freshness. — Why, the summer's
here.

Marlowe

Wait ; I will see. Dost thou remember her ?
A little figure, standing white and shy,
Like those above the Portal there at home,
On the Cathedral. And by now — by now —
(*harshly*)

What wilt thou wager ? She is worn with rain
And sodden leaves. There's nothing lovely
left.

The storms have hurt her fairness, — and per-
haps

Her hands are broken. She was beautiful ;
And so there is some ruin come upon her.
Yes, I will see !

Lodge

No ! To what end were that ?

Marlowe

And if there be no change, then I am saved,
Yes, I am saved! She will remember me.
Come, I will take the Song I promised her
Too long ago. I did forget, — but now
I have it all! — I bring my wedding-gift —

*[Goes to the table and shakes papers out of
the books, madly.]*

Yes, she is wed. But what of that? You
heard?

She had a mind to me. — Oh, but she lis-
tened! —

And she shall have her song. — And I will
have

The kiss she would not give me, for a token!

Reënter from the tap-room Rowse, five or six

Taverners, and the Host.

A pilgrimage, a pilgrimage, Tom Lodge!

Host

What's on?

Rowse

— Nay, that should be a merry humor!

'A pilgrimage,' says he, 'a pilgrimage'!

[Laughter.]

*[Marlowe faces the group with contemptu-
ous enjoyment. They hail his speech de-
lightedly.]*

Marlowe

Give ear unto the Preacher : It is written,
That for the sake of but one righteous man,
A city shall be saved. But I, in truth,
Seeing the sickness wear in London yonder,
Am sore in doubt to find a perfect soul.

[*Loud laughter.*

I have been with you long, and I do think
I find it not among you.

Rowse

— Shall I laugh
Like this another twelve-month ?

Marlowe

Who can say ?
Look to yourselves ! — For me, I must be-
gone.

[*To Lodge exultantly over their heads while
they cheer.*

Ay, to the Shrine ! — to heal me of my curse.
A pilgrimage !

ACT IV

SCENE: *Whitsun-eve near Canterbury, the last of May. Moonrise. Interior of a spacious farmhouse. Casements at back open to the twilight. — A stair to left of centre leading to a gallery above, from which opens a door to an upper chamber. There is a remnant of fire in the open chimney-place left, with a settle against the landing of the stairway, making an ingle nook. Right, a dresser with a few pieces of Tudor silver and a pitcher of water. Rushes on the floor. — Flowering boughs hung about. Door at back, centre.*

Discovered at rise, ALISON and GABRIEL side by side at the open casement; GABRIEL with his viol. They sing softly together: he humming and occasionally chiming in with a deep note. At intervals there is sound of a cathedral bell from Canterbury.

Song

SUMMER-MOON, Summer-moon,
Bless thy golden face.

Come above the downs, now :

Do the garden grace.

While we are thy care to keep,

Bless the field, bless the sheep ;

Shine on our sleep.

While the nightingales do sing,

Come, bonny guest.

Thy foot-fall is a silver thing,

West, — west.

Morning goes and afternoon ;

Summer will be going soon.

Ay, Summer-moon !

Alison

— See.

Gabriel

She is coming.

Alison

Just above the trees,

The blessed moon.

Gabriel

— Thanks to our wakening !

Ay, 't is a golden. But she cannot give

A light like thee.

— Come, thou art wearied out.
What hast thou done with Hugh and Jennifer?

Alison

I bade them go and have their Whitsun-ale
With all the neighbors. We will watch at
home,

And let them take their turn of merriment.

I am content. [Gabriel *puts by his viol.*

Gabriel

A little vigil then ;

A few hours more, and then 't is the Moon's
watch,

While Alison may sleep. So the good world
Will turn and take its rest.

Alison

You laugh at me.

Oh, the long, long, bright day ! I'm wearied
out

Most sweetly. What a brave font-hallowing
It was ; and then the morrice-dances there,
Around the maypole. — Dost thou see the
green

Upon the hem of this ? — Dear grass of
May !

Little green kisses on my Whitsun-shoes !

And then the neighbors all. — And home with thee.

A long, bright day.

[They come down to the settle.

Gabriel

Ay, now we 're home again.

Alison

And still it is so like a bridal time.

You keep my eyes wide open with your praise
Stolen from the moon. Take care: she may
not bless

The harvest, goodman!

Gabriel

I may come to be
Some poet-hood, altho' I have few words.
Sweet-cheek, I have a mind to say a thing.

Alison (drowsily)

Say on. Indeed I hear thee. Come, what
news?

Gabriel

Oh, is it so? Do I say nothing then
Unless it be some news? Of men or sheep?
Well, some day I shall get this trick o' words.
Mark what I learn: 't is just the pointing
out

A family resemblance. If I say,

'Thou art my hawthorn and my marigold,
And a white swan moreover,' simple men
May say I lie; for thou art not, in faith.
But if I say thou 'rt like them, in that all
Be goodly things and gladden heart to see,
Why this is true; and so I am a poet.
But for the things I care to dwell on most,
Like other men, — for I am daily wear! —
They are Moon and Rose, — and such a Sum-
mer-eve.

Now mark me what I say: my Moon, my
Rose,

My own Midsummer-Eve, thou art all these.

[He looks into her face, stroking her hair.

She is asleep.

Eh, half-asleep? Marry, 't is ever so;

I wax most eloquent to thy shut eyes.

Here is my schooling-hour in gentle speech.

I can say over all the things I read,

Sweet-one-by-one: marry, 't is ever so;

I never tune my tongue while thou art waking!

*[A pause broken by the sound of steps on
the walk and up to the door at back.*

Enter Barnby

Barnby

Well, well —

[Alison wakes.

Alison

What, home so soon?

Barnby

An errand, lass,

An errand only; I am off again —

Eh, a fine night! — Whom should I meet with
now,

Only a half hour back, in Mercery Lane,

But some one — nay, a friend. 'T is Richard
Bame!And he would have me stop and bid thee,
lad,

To meet him at The Chequers-of-the-Hope,

Ay, this same even, to a Whitsun-ale.

Alison

Bame?

*Barnby*Ay. And do it, lad. The fellow's sore,
Thou knowest. I did see him last at Dept-
ford

To tell him of thy wedding. — But by this,

See you, he plucks up heart to be a man

And make his peace with Gabriel.

Gabriel

I'll go.

But why, I wonder, did he not come here?

Alison

Oh, he were best to see you, Gabriel,
Alone. — And come back early.

Barnby

I'll along

With you, lad, to the turning.

[*Exeunt Barnby and Gabriel.*

[*The twilight rapidly darkens. Alison watches them from the casement. Gabriel's voice is heard singing, as he goes down the road.*

'While we are thy care to keep,
Bless the field — bless the sheep,
Shine on our sleep.'

Alison (half-singing as if it were a charm).

Summer-Moon, Summer-Moon,
Now the day is done;
Shed a little silverness
Down on Alison.

Summer-Moon, Summer-Moon,
Since he loves thee well,
Bless as I can never do,
Gabriel.

Heigh-ho! When he is by, I do not mark,
But when he's gone the house seems very still.
Heigh-ho! — But I'm asleep.

[She goes upstairs slowly, humming, and into the upper chamber, closing the door. The place is dark for a moment. A pause; then footsteps on the garden walk. — Some one looks in at the casement; comes to the door and knocks; knocks again loudly.]

Enter Marlowe. — He goes to the stair and beats upon it with his dagger once or twice, looking about him, half evilly. Above, the door opens slightly.

Alison

What, Gabriel?

Nay, who? — Are you come back again?

[He makes no reply. Alison appears in the gallery, without her coif, a lighted candle in her hand. She is uncertain and troubled, but full of calmness. Unable to see who it is, she descends the stairs deliberately, holding the candle high. He watches her. On the last step, she lifts the candle so that the light falls upon his face, and looks at him steadily for a second; then grasps the post of the stair, with a shock of grief and amazement.]

— 'T is thou!

Christopher Marlowe.

Marlowe (watching her)

Alison.

Alison

'T is thou!

Marlowe

So I am changed, then.

Alison

Nay, I cannot see.

The fire is dying.

[She goes to the fire-place.]

Marlowe

Come and look at me.

The fire is dead. — Light up the candles
here,

If thou art feared of shadows!

Alison

Nay, I am not.

Marlowe

I frighted you with knocking on the door;
Though, sooth to say, sweet friend, no high-
wayman

Would so compel a welcome. — I am changed.
Regard me not. — I see you had forgotten
My face.

Alison

No, no ; indeed it is not true.

Marlowe

What irks you then? That I am something
pale?

Older? — By more, indeed, than these three
years.

For so youth wears — and damask may grow
dull —

In sodden weather. Well. But you, you
keep

The face of Maytime. Let me see it.

Alison (with an outburst of compassion)

Ah,

Thou art all wearied out!

Marlowe

. . . Set down the light.

It dazzles. — No. I prithee, pardon me.

Yes, I am weary. I have frightened you?

You were alone?

Alison

Ay, they are gone awhile.

Marlowe

No neighbor near? Nay, Bride! And you
alone!

Why are you left alone? (*winningly*)

Alison

'T is Whitsun-eve.

Marlowe (looking at the boughs)

These breathe of holiday. So, Whitsun-eve.
They are not bridal then?

Alison

Oh, we were wed

Beyond a month ago.

Marlowe

The bridal boughs
Are faded, are they? — No? But I am late
To bring you bridal wishes, though I come :
And here 's my wedding gift. — Stay —

[Feels in his breast.]

Alison

— Oh, it is —

Marlowe

The Song, 'Come live with me, and be my
Love.'

Have you forgotten?

Alison

I! — But you — 't is not —

Marlowe (at a loss to find it).

Gone? But it is. — I set it down for you
In a fair copy ; and it is not here.

Where should I lose it? — At the inn, belike,
Where I did spend some moment but to
ask —

The road. — I am more a beggar than I dreamed.

You should have had the song.

Alison

Ah, vex you not.

Indeed, I have it.

[*Smiling.*

Marlowe

Where?

Alison (simply, touching her heart)

It is all here.

Marlowe

Nay! — It was true, then. — You, you do not mean —

You do not mean that you remember all,
With the one hearing.

Alison

Nay, not all, not all.

Marlowe

With the one hearing! Will you tell me this?

Alison

With the one hearing? Ah, friend Christopher,

You sang it to me once; but I could hear
Over and over, many, many days,
As if you sang.

Marlowe (watching her)

You were a dreamer, then.

I took you for a little country child,
That sleeps without a dream.

Alison

Oh, children dream.

Marlowe

And are you happy? — Bride? For as to me,
You see that I am altered; you will say,
With dreams and waking: dreams of powers
and thrones

And principalities, as the Book will have it, —
And waking in the mire. You do not know
The sense of waking down among the dead,
Hard by some lazar-house.

Alison (turning to the fire)

Nay; but I know

The sense of death. And then to rise again,
And feel thyself bewildered, like a spirit
Out of the grave-clothes and the fragrant
strewings;

Early and tranquil, — happy; — and yet thin,
Thin for the dawn to shine through as a shell,
And some way older grown.

Marlowe (behind her)

Thou sayest this?

Alison

Ah, I am older.

Marlowe

Where didst thou learn this?

[She is silent, looking at the fire with endurance.]

Where didst thou learn? Of what extremity?
Long, — unto death? — It was a sorrow then?
Some grief that wore thee so —

Alison

It was a grief.

Marlowe (ironically)

A bitter grief?

Alison

Ay, it was bitter then.

Marlowe

Tell me of it. There is no grief for thee
By right; it cannot be. There was no grief,
Sure, but a dream. Tell me the dream.

Alison

No.

Marlowe

No? —

Alison

It is not now my own.

Marlowe (eagerly)

Thou wilt not tell me?

Alison

No.

Marlowe

Wilt thou do one little service then, —
But for a whim? Stand here and let me see
Thy face, if it has altered. When you came
Downstair but now, I could not see you well,
For light. *[Reaching a candle.*

Is this the same you held? Another,
*[He takes another and she stands tremulously
quiet while he faces her, watching her
always.*

Another then — so, prithee. Thou hast heard
Of Light that shined in darkness, hast thou not?
And darkness comprehended not the Light?
So. But I tell thee why. It was because
The Dark, a sleeping brute, was blinded first,
Bewildered at a thing it did not know.
Nay, think, to have seen it never, never yet!
Have pity on the Dark, I tell you, Bride.
For after all is said, there is no thing
So hails the Light as that same blackness there,
O'er which it shines the whiter. Do you think
It will not know at last? — it will not know?

[She slowly turns towards the fire again, and listens, as he sets down the candle with a shaking hand.]

What of the darkness? Will you ever try
To fathom that? Nay, nay, why should you so,
You or another? Yet I tell you this:
There is one side of the earth that even now
Groans in the darkness, covered up with gloom
And the low tide and dregs of sodden wreck,
Waiting and waiting, lightless. Even now,
While you can bless the Moon that blesses you,
And here the wildest valley and the down,
Oblivious of all shadow, — silver brimmed,
Turn to her whiteness, like a dreaming face
Unto the eyes that love; a wistful cheek,
A heart of earth, for her all white, all white.
Thou dost not know.

Alison

I hear.

Marlowe (behind her)

But yet not all.

I will not tell thee all. Yet think of this.
There are a thousand things men know of me
To my dishonor. There are thousand more
Their own dishonor blackens me withal:
Lies, slanders, fear! — My sins they have by
rote,

And never miss one ; no ! no miser of them
Who, prying in the mire with hands of greed,
After a missing groat, could let that go, —
But not a jest of mine ! — My blackest depth
They know ; and more than I they know of
it,

Who live and hunt me there, yes, only there,
Avid of foulness, so they hound me out,
Away — away — from any chance of grace, —
Away from blessing that they prate about,
But never saw and never dreamed upon, —
And know not how to long for with desire !
The Dark, yes, yes. But stranger times than all,
The few, few times that I have looked at sin,
Facing it, longing, — passed it, — (why, in-
deed ?)

They know not ! Ay, the one time in the world,
I put from me — I strove to put from me —
My Heart's Desire, none knoweth, no, not
one,

And none will ever know.

Alison (turning suddenly)

But I will keep
Thy word, with mine eyes dark.

Marlowe

Thou dost not know !

Alison

But I will keep it. Leave it here with me,
Thy heaviness, — thy grief.

Marlowe

Believest thou?

Alison

Ay, as God liveth!

Marlowe

— Dost thou think on Him? —

Well, I have seen thee; thou art here, at
least.

Alison (gently)

Art thou an unbeliever?

Marlowe

I believe

In thee.

[She looks towards him wistfully. He hesitates. Then, as she sits in the corner of the settle by the fire, suddenly he crosses and flings himself passionately on his knees beside her, burying his face against her gown.]

. . . Oh, take my heart into thy hand,
Thou virgin-mother . . . if it will not stain.
Thou knowest that the figures carven out
Above the Portal . . . sometimes rest a bird.

And hold secure — a nest, for pity's sake ;
A sorry nest, — a beggar thatch of straw
And stolen bravery that yet will cling
To that home shelter, proud it is so white.
This fantasy — thou wilt not understand ;
But thou art patient. — So, I trust to thee
All that I dream of that no man could guess :
The dreams that come not true ; the broken
 hope ;

Some manhood which I know not in myself,
That will not be consoled. . . .

Whatever thou believest, — in thy hands.
I shall look back and think it is not dead ;
But thou wilt keep it for me.

[*Bell in the distance. He rises.*

— Wilt thou not ?

Alison

Oh, I will keep it.

[*They face each other radiantly.*

See, 't is Whitsun-eve.

To-morrow, —

Marlowe

Then ?

Alison

You know, the old wives say
Whatever one shall ask and pray to have

Of the Sun, that rises dancing in that dawn,
Why, you shall have it surely. I will pray —

Marlowe

Some boon for me?

Alison

Indeed, for thee: thy peace.

Marlowe

I must go far for that!

Alison

To thine own heart.

For if thou have it not within thy heart,
The world will never spend a thought for thee;
And all things fail.

Marlowe (with passion)

How camest thou so wise?

Alison

Nay, I am old!

Marlowe

How camest thou so wise? —

And I have naught to give thee. — It is gone.
Strange, that I cannot think. Ah well, what
need? —

What need of songs for you? Your people come
Home to you soon?

Alison

Yes, father and — Gabriel.

Marlowe (watching her)

'T was he belike that passed me on the road,
Singing, as I came hither. — Hear the bell.

'T is a long road. Mayhap, before I go . . .
Wilt thou . . . wilt give me — nay, I am
athirst —

A cup of . . . water ?

Alison

Oh, but only that ?

Marlowe (after a pause)

A cup of water,

[She hastens to bring it from the dresser.

He drinks, and hands her the cup.

Alison

Nay, no more ?

Marlowe

No more.

Indeed, I am most happy. Fare you well.

If there were any blessing in my tongue —

But — keep thee well.

Alison

All good go with thee !

Marlowe (going)

Yet,

Come to the door with me and hold the light,

So that I see my way.

Alison (between laughter and tears)

Why, there's the moon
Over us all. What shall I say of thee?

Marlowe

Ay, but she doth not give so clear a light
As thou.

Alison

I shall believe thou art afraid!

Marlowe

So am I, — of the Dark.

Alison (in the doorway.)

Lo, now!

Marlowe

Good-night.

[*He steps back, looking at her for a moment ;
turns ; goes out. She stands in the door-
way with her candle uplifted.*

ACT V

SCENE: *Deptford tavern, 1 June, 1593. Early evening. — Doors and casements wide. No lights within the tavern. — Outside, a red afterglow. — A solitary figure blots the light from the window, right; it is MARLOWE sitting in his accustomed place, his cup before him. Without, at a little distance, the BELLMAN'S voice is heard in a sing-song call. MARLOWE lifts his head and listens.*

Bellman

PAST — seven — o'clock — and a sultry evening.

Marlowe

*'It strikes, it strikes! Now body turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!
O mercy, heaven! look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile.'* —

Bellman (passing)

Past — seven — o'clock — and a sultry evening.

Enter from tap-room, Host with three or four Taverners. They light the place squalidly, order the tables, et cetera. — Marlowe continues his 'Faustus' monologue, murmuring to himself ironically.

Marlowe

*'Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease and midnight never come:
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
O lente, lente, currite, noctis equi!'*

Bellman (in the distance)

Past — seven — o'clock — a sultry — evening.

Marlowe

*'The stars move still, time runs, the clock will
strike —*

The devil will come and Faustus must be damned.

[Looking out at the afterglow.

See where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!

One drop of blood will save me: O my Christ! —

Rend not my heart for naming of my Christ;

Yet will I call' —

Enter from the street, Francis Archer, Rowse,

Gill, and others, men and women. They cluster about the tables, left, noisily. The Host and a tapster bring in ale.

[Marlowe mutters on to himself, and the words are lost in the street noises of rough singing and footsteps.

Rowse (to Archer and Gill)

Yare, yare!

Archer

— Here is a nook.

[They come down to a table, left.

Rowse

A quiet haven for a cup o' comfort,
After a scorching day. (To Host.) What cheer?
Bestir!

Gill

Hurry thy heels. We're all as dry as mowers! —

Archer

Now for a song and sack.

Rowse

— Nay, first the sack,
And then a rowse and three, to Mistress Moll.

Gill (cuffing him)

'T is Gillian is my name, — I am no Moll.

Here 's for a gentle spirit. Wear my favor!

[Laughter.

[Marlowe looks at the revellers with fixed eyes.

Marlowe

‘ *This soul should fly from me, and I be changed
Into some brutish beast. — All beasts are happy,
For when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolved in elements ;
But mine must still live to be plagued in hell.*

Rowse (looking at Marlowe)

There is that merry devil over yond !
He sits there like Beelzebub the devil.

Gill

That ’s the wrong name. Beelzebub ’s a prince.

Archer

Will you be learned ? — Nay, I know not
which !

Call him and see what name he ’ll answer to.

Rowse (calling Marlowe)

Ho, devil, devil, devil, — here, good devil !

Gill

Nay, he ’s too proud for us.

Archer

Marry, too gloomy !

A game, a game ! How stand you for a game ?
And Mistress, you shall cast your eye upon it,
And so amend me.

[*Lays some coins upon the table. They play.*

Enter Bame. He comes down slowly, as if according to habit, then turns to look at the seat by the window, and sees Marlowe. As if doubting his senses, he points to him.

Bame

Look you . . . he is there.

Look, — it was all for nothing. He is there.

Rowse (turning)

Why, here am I, and here 's some other he's!
Will 't do ye?

Archer

Here 's a man that hath one wit.

Bame (madly)

He is come back, ye know it, — here again!
But will you shield him? Nay, not long, not
long.

'T is I will shew . . . Come, turn him to the
street!

[*Marlowe listens contemptuously. Bame
appeals to the Host.*

Host

To humor thee? Nay, mind thy tongue, I
say,

If thou wilt make complaint.

Bame

. . . I say, you 're all

Set upon ruin if you harbor him.

They are upon his track as ye shall see! —

And you will let him stay, — make arrogant,

Eat, drink, sit idle by the window there

To drive you mad. — I say, to drive you mad!

[*Loud laughter.*

Ay, will you laugh? Not long. — Ye are all
sold

Unto the devil . . . But if ye take it light

To hobanob with the blasphemer there,

Ask what he waits and wherefore? I am
by,

As any good and honest man, to shew

That he is lay'd for. Ask him if he come

From Canterbury.

Rowse

What ado in that?

He did not burn the city, did he so?

Or rob the shrine?

[*Laughter.*

Bame (eagerly)

The shrine — the shrine, says he! —

Ay, you have said it best, what he would do.

You heard him. But he meant to steal away

The Bride!

[*Marlowe rises.*

Look there, — see him; I knew, — I knew!

I went to warn them; but they would not hear!
I found the cursed letter that he wrote, —
Made like a ballad, all to charm her eyes
With vows and promises; all love; and she,
So young — a gentlewoman —

Marlowe (coming down towards Bame)

Strangle thee!

Thou cast-off devil of madness —

Host

Sirs, — good sirs —

The Watch —

Archer

Ah, hold thy drone and let us hear!

Bame (holding up a paper)

He shall not fool ye, — I have witness; — read!

He bids her come — *[Reading.*

‘Come live with me, and be’ —

Marlowe (snatching the paper)

‘And be my Love.’ — The song — sole innocent!

[He thrusts it in his breast.

Here, come — come home.

(*To Bame.*) — For thee, thou primal worm,
Turn, turn again! I would not bruise thy
head

With my own heel. — Thou ineffectual adder!

Bame

Shall it be suffered for another day?
I told you he is lay'd for . . . You shall see
The law upon him and upon yourselves
To fellow with him. He, — a lying player,
A conjurer, an atheist, that drinks
And wagers with a swarm of outcast knaves,
Thieves, ruffians, and the women worse than
all! —

The women, after —

Marlowe (fiercely)

Peace!

Bame (pointing to the whole group)

He comes back here,
Here from his own town and from her, from
her —
From her —

Gill

Now mend thy manners! By the mass,
And what is she? —

Marlowe (crossing hastily to Gill and bowing)

Madam, you hear!

Bame (beside himself)

Look there!

Marlowe (with ceremony)

Madam, the fellow speaks despitefully
Here of your graces.

Gill

Ay, he did, he did !

So thank you, you 're an honest gentleman.

Archer (to Marlowe)

Hold off. Will you be merry ? But not here.
Have off with you ! — This quarrel's mine.

Do you

Keep to your own !

Marlowe (to Bame, indicating Gill)

. . . In defence of the gentlewoman

Here. [*The Taverners gather about.*]

Archer (to Marlowe)

'T is my quarrel, — I shall do for him !

What make you meddling here ?

Marlowe (savagely, trying to put aside Archer)

Out of my way ! —

What, fool ? Will you be dead ? — Why,
have your will ! [*Drawing.*]

Bame

Stay them.

Marlowe (to him)

— You, second ! — This is but a moment !

Archer

Ah, do you reckon so ? — [*Drawing.*]

Host

Stay — stay !

Marlowe

— Not I !

[*They fight. Marlowe disarms Archer and flings away both swords. — Archer rushes upon him ; they grapple. Marlowe draws his dagger ; Archer catches it and stabs him as the crowd shuts in. — The crowd parts. Marlowe falters, hands over eyes, then falls. — Some taverners rush to the street ; others blow out candles ; some stand by Archer who breathes hard. — Bame in a daze.*

Rowse

Hist — hist !

Archer

— He's ended.

A By-stander

Call the Watch !

Others

— The Watch !

[*Exeunt, calling.*

[*Noise of horse's hoofs, then*

Enter Gabriel Andrew, breathless and travel-stained.

Gabriel

— What's here ? . . . Already ! . . .

(*To Bame.*) *Thou —*

Bame

— It was not I.

[*Gabriel hastens to Marlowe, and leans over him, kneeling to raise his head.*

Gabriel

Dost thou not know me? — Canst thou hear?

No — no?

Marlowe

O God . . . God . . . God! [He dies.

[*The tread of the watch is heard a little way off. Within there is silence. — Bame still regards the body of Marlowe vacantly. As the tread of the watch sounds nearer he moves towards Marlowe, fascinated; then draws back again.*

Bame (to the body)

Will you be looking yet? — Ah, shut the eyes!

Enter the watchmen led by the Watch, with a lanthorn. — The Taverners, murmuring, stand back.

The Watch

What's here?

A By-stander

A man is dying.

Second By-stander

— Nay, he's dead.

The Watch

Who is he?

Host

— Nay, I know not. 'T is no guest
Of mine.

Rowse

His name is Marley. —

Host

— 'T is a player —

[*The watchmen come down to the body of
Marlowe and lift up the lanthorn over
his face. Gabriel is kneeling still, with
his hand on Marlowe's heart.*

'T was done with his own dagger. He would
die,

Ye see! — and that with cursing to the end.

Gabriel

Peace!

Host

— Did ye hear the oath?

Gabriel

I heard the cry.

THE WINGS
A Drama in One Act

(Published in 1907)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CERDIC.

ÆLFRIC the King.

BRUN. „

EDBURGA.

TIME: *Northumbria before 700 A.D.*



The Wings

The SCENE passes within a low hut, Saxon-built. At back, a small window-space; centre, a doorway, past which the seabirds fly in a gray light. Against the right wall, a seat and a shelf with one or two great books, a half-loaf of bread, and a lamp without a light. Nearby, a large unlighted lanthorn. On the left wall, a rude wooden cross; below it, a bench with a slab of stone upon it, covered over, mallet, chisel and other tools. Also to the left, a low door, now shut, leading to an inner cell. Twilight of a bleak day.

Enter BRUN the fisher-boy, doubtfully. He looks from bench to books, and shakes his head. There appears on the threshold behind him the figure of a woman, EDBURGA, in a long cloak. BRUN, when he turns, waves her back with a gesture of warning entreaty.

Brun

No more, but wings and wings! And still no light.

He is not here, for all the night be wild.
The wind cries out; — there will be broken
wings,
And they do vex him, ever. Nay, forbear!

[*Edburga stands in the doorway*

Gudewife, forbear! Ye may not step within.
He is not here, although the door stood wide;
See you, the holy Cerdic is not here.

Edburga

Where, then?

Brun

God wot! 'Twill be a mickle hap
That holds him fast; and no light litten yet.
The light is wanting. — Do not come within;
Bide yonder.

Edburga

Wherefore? Wit ye who am I?

[*He shakes his head. She draws aside veil and wimple, discovering a young face and long braids of red-gold hair; then she steps in arrogantly, to his dumb distress. While he replies in abashed singsong to her questions, she looks about her with something between scorn and curiosity.*

Deem ye the holy Cerdic hides away?
Or that I come for naught? — What art thou
called?

Brun

Brun, son of Wulfstan. . . .

Edburga

And what dost thou here?

Brun

Ye bade me lead you hither from the shore,
See you; — therefore I came. Often I come,
Likewise to bring the holy Cerdic bread,
And tidings from the Abbey. . . . Ye can hear
Our bell, save when the wind will be too high,
At vesper-time and curfew. — He would fast,
Ye wit, till he were like the lanthorn yonder,
As ye could see a light through, if let be!
Then I row hither, or across the bar
I come here at low water, and bring bread.
And if I did not, sure the Angel would.

Edburga

Sooth!

Brun

All folk say. Once I lay by to watch,
Till nigh I heard it coming. For I dread
Some day the Angel seize me by the hair!
Lady, ye wit no woman can be here,
In holy Cerdic's cell.

Edburga

Was this thy dread? —
And dare no townsfolk come?

Brun

Save they be sick
And sore possess, no nigher than the door!
But ye have come within. Pray now, go
forth!

Edburga (stealthily)

And I, worn weary, I must forth again
Into the wet, for that I am a Woman?

Brun

Needs must ye take it ill to be a woman.
But see, there is a tree to shelter by,
A dark tree yonder, hard upon the dune. —
Forsooth, all womankind he should mislike;
And beyond that, men say it was a woman
Drove Cerdic from the King.

Edburga

Men say? . . . What men?

Brun

Sooth, did ye never hear?

Edburga

What do men say?

Brun

It was for chiding the King's light-o'-love, —
I wot not who, no more than ye; —

Edburga

Her name
Is called Edburga.

Brun

Ay, an evil woman!

She was it, brought mislike upon the King,
And Cerdic bade him leave her. — And the King
Would not; but still she wasteth all his days,
And, for her sake, he hath no mind to wed.
And he was wroth; and, likewise for her sake,
He drove the holy Cerdic from the town. —
But Cerdic found our island. And they tell,
His faring here must bring a blessing down.

Edburga

Ay, hath it fallen yet? Methought the isle
Looked bare enough, and starven!

Brun

Nay, not yet.

But likewise there are curses in the court;
And men cry out on Ælfric. — Wit ye well,
Their longing is for Cerdic home again.

Edburga

And Cerdic, will he hence? When the King
comes,

With shining gifts!

[*Between her teeth*

Brun

If he put *her* away,

It may be . . . See you, Cerdic is so holy,
They tell he will not look upon a woman
When he must speak with them. But I'm a man:

I talk with him, and look. And so I too
Would not have spoke with ye, but that ye
came
To ask the way ——

Edburga

Unto that holy man. . . .

Yea, truly! I would see and speak with Cerdic.
Ye deem he cometh hither soon?

Brun

God wot!

He hath a Book here that he reads upon;
Likewise he knoweth how to grave on stone,
With pictures like to frost. But oftentimes
All day he standeth on the rocks, adream,
So stark the sea-birds have no fear of him,
But graze his face in flying. So, belike,
It is a Vision that doth keep him now;
For still the light is ever lit, by now.
He will be coming. . . . Ye must bide beyond.

Edburga

Go thou. And I will follow to thy tree,
There to sit down . . . and pray . . . till I behold
Thy holy Cerdic coming. Have no fear!
See: I will wrap my mantle round my hair,
As holy men would have us do. Such peril,—
And dear enchantment, in a woman's hair!
So: 'tis my will to stand thus in the wind,

Now, while the sun sets, and until the Fiend
That rends me, have his own; or Cerdic —

Brun

Woe!

The Fiend! —

Edburga

That dwells in Woman: thou hast said.

Brun

Woe that I brought ye here to Cerdic's cell!

Edburga (undoing a scarf from her neck)

Nay, thou wilt never rue it. Take this scarf
So, knotted thrice, — unto the farthest rock,
Where thou shalt bind it to that only bush, —
The thorn thou shewedst me; and so let hang
That the sea-winds may sift and winnow it.
This if thou do — and look not back again, —
And say thy prayer, likewise, for holy Cerdic,
There shall no hurt come nigh thee from the
Fiend.

But I must bide by yonder starven pine,
Till Cerdic pass, . . . to shrive me.

Brun (terrified)

Ay, go hence!

There doth he bless the sick.

Edburga

I follow thee.

And may the saints forgive it to this — *saint,*

There stepped upon his threshold one poor
woman,

Seeing he knew not! — I will after thee.

Brun

Nay, do not! Sooth, I will as ye have said.

Edburga

Never look back!

Brun (terrified)

By holy Guthlac, never! —

When ye are shriven . . . take the self-same
way

Back to the shore. . . .

[*Running out*

God shield the holy Cerdic!

*Edburga (alone, stretching out her arms with
savage relief)*

God crush the holy Cerdic, with His shield!

[*She looks about her, between curiosity and
aversion; then begins to sing with exuberant
defiance of the place.*

If the moon were mine

For a silver cup.

Ah, but I would fill it up

With red wine, red wine!

Then, O love of mine. . . .

[*She stops singing as she comes to the bench*

with the covered stone, and draws near to look, as if it fascinated and repelled her; then she turns away, silent. From the doorway, she seems to listen; then calls through her hands in a soft, high voice, like the wind.

Ælfric . . . the King!

[Exit Edburga

[The door blows shut after her. Deep twilight falls. There is a pause, filled with the crying of wind and of seagulls. Then the low door in the left wall opens, and Cerdic gropes his way in, carrying a taper. He is a young monk with the keen face of a mystic, worn white with fatigue. He seems half tranced.

Cerdic

The darkness here. . . . Need be, I fell asleep.
Sleep, sleep for me, and in the daytime! — Ah,
The little sleep! Could I not watch one hour?
Yea, Lord, for all the hours of day and night;
Save that in sleep, the wings stoop near to me
I grasp for vainly, waking. . . . Was it sleep?
Or were they here, the voices and the wings? —
Not yours, beloved birds! Not yours that
beat

Gray through the wind and wet, in search of
me.

Lady of Heaven! Forgive me that I slept,

Forgetful of thy birds, to call them in
And break my bread with them.

*[He goes to the shelf, and taking the loaf down,
breaks and scatters it from the doorway,
afterwards closing the door.]*

Take all, — take all!

For I have slept; and I am filled indeed,
With manna and with light.

Yet, O thou Blessèd!

If my poor prayer and longing may avail,
Like hands of need, dragging thy garment's hem,
Vouchsafe to me, here in my wilderness,
One sign to ease the hunger of my heart,
That calls and echoes, prays and hears the
prayer,

Echoed and ebbing, till it surge again;
High tide, — low tide, — but never any word.
High tide, — low tide; never a face to see!

*[He comes down to the bench. From his taper
he lights the lanthorn, and sets it by; then
reverently he lifts the covering-cloth from the
stone, to look upon his work.]*

Our Lady of all Comfort. Rose of Heaven!
Could I but make her, here, as in my dream,
That blessèd Face, — the stone should put forth
might

Unto blind eyes, and they would look, and see!

Ah, when? — Poor scribbled track, sore pitiful,
Of wingless longing! Here the Face should be;
With this gray blankness where the eyes would
shine,

More lovely blue than ever twilight sea.
And here would be her hair; — a golden wave
Of sunset, ebbing redly in the west . . .
Her hair. . . . But never can I make her hands,
Like to those palest roses that did grow
Close to the Abbey wall. . . . Ah, could I know,
Even in a dream! Since unto lowlier men
Than blessèd Luke, she hath vouchsafed to see
Her very face. Comfort this halting tool, —
Quicken this stone! Let not the earth go dark
Of such a likeness for men's hearts to keep,
Beautiful, on the altar of that temple
Whose walls be blazoned with the shapes of
earth, —

Scribbled and scarred with basest names and
things,

Foul upon clear! Even as my Dream did fade
When some voice in my soul, more ware than I,
Thrust me awake, crying, 'Ælfric — the King!'
And I awoke, and heard no more. —

[Lifting his face with shut eyes.]

Let be!

There shall no hurt come near my dream of thee;

But I will count a thousand dawning suns,
Patient, so be that on some dawn of day,
Thou lean from out of heaven, and I may see
Thy face like dawn above thy Star-in-the-
East,

Mother of all the motherless, — God's Mother!
And still, though I should count the thousand
years,

Still shall my heart be ready.

[The wind shakes the door; and the gulls go by.
— Ah, the wings!

Ever thy birds, the while I hark for thee.
Never thy word, but only call of birds,
And waves and wind, and evermore the wings
Of sea-gulls that I hear with quickened heart
Of hope: because they knock upon my door,
Knocking and mocking, ever! Be it so. —
Lady of Heaven, beside thy flock of stars,
Who broodest over this mid-world as though
It were an ailing lamb, I wait for thee.

I harken, and my heart is at the gate . . .
My soul doth wait, as a poor vacant chamber,
With the door wide like famine, but for thee;
Ay, and the torches waiting for a fire
White from the stars, — not breathing, save for
thee.

O Moon of Pity, if this loneliness,

And the sore heart of man that knows but
how

To seek a home, can ever draw thee down,
Lean from thy glory with thy mother-looks;
Lean down to bless, — follow thy pity, down, —
Down to this solitude. Let me once look
On Thee!

[A knocking on the door. Cerdic looks up with fixed eyes. The door swings open, and Edburga stands on the threshold, her veil shadowing her face, the two long golden braids hanging below, upon her breast. — She steps in, and stands regarding him for a moment; then speaks in a voice without emotion of any kind.]

Edburga

Knowest thou me?

[Cerdic, as in a trance, crosses his arms on his breast. His face grows radiant with beatitude. Without giving sign of her bewilderment, Edburga comes forward slowly, facing him. Then she loosens the veil from her head and the cloak from her shoulders. They fall about her feet; she stands richly arrayed. Cerdic sinks upon his knees.]

Behold me. . . . Thou art Cerdic.

Cerdic (in a far-off voice)

Lady, thou knowest.

Edburga

Yea, thou hast well said.

I know thee what thou art. Thou dost not
know

What I am. — Dost thou dream?

Cerdic

It well may be . . .

I dream.

Edburga

Wake then. For thou shouldst know me, Cerdic.

*[He does not move. She regards him with a
closer curiosity.]*

Make me some firelight here. For I am cold.

Cerdic

Lady, have pity that my heart is shamed

And my poor home is witless of the fire,

What warmth may be. I had no thought — of
this.

Edburga

Wake, Cerdic. 'Tis no dream. Albeit thine eyes

Never looked yet on mine. Guess, who am I?

Thy lips have used my name. Why art thou
dumb

But now?

[He answers in a joyful prayer.]

Cerdic

Thy grace must needs unseal this mouth.
Thou knowest. — Give me leave to tell of thee,
In words like golden harp-strings; but to tell
How all the air is summer with thy coming,
And morn doth flush the furrows of the sea!
Yea, how thy voice hath fallen, like white
 manna,
To fill the craving hunger of the soul
That longed for God and thee.

[She recoils with sudden contemptuous laughter.]

Edburga

Nay, for us twain!
This, then, is Holy Cerdic, who would look
Upon no woman! . . . Thou, who wouldst have
 us

Forswear all earth, for heaven somewhere outside,

Tell me, O wise one, of this precious rede:
How to keep both, shut fast in godly hands!

[Cerdic, stricken aghast, reaches towards the fallen mantle and touches it in horror, to make sure. As his vision breaks, he rises and stands back, striving to master his anguish.]

Dreaming, good sooth! You touch it, to make
 sure,

Dreamer of far-off women? But this dream
Is a true dream; as I am very Woman.
Nor shalt thou bid me go till I have said.
So mild thou wert, before I made me known!

Cerdic (gravely)

Known, maiden?

*[She regards him keenly; then goes to the door,
shuts it, and turns towards him, with
triumph growing in her looks.]*

Edburga

Nay, then! — I will tell thee more.
How shouldst thou know me? I am the first
woman,

Haply, thine eyes have met; and so, like Eve,
Older and wiser than thou! — I come to tell,
First, of the few, far things thou dost not
know;

Then, of thyself, thou knowest less than all; . . .
Then . . . what a pitiful King's Counsellor
Thou wert, — too craven to behold a woman!

Cerdic

No longer give I counsel, well or ill,
Unto the King. Another counsellor
He hath preferred before me; for whose sake
I am an exile, and this place my home.

Edburga

Haply it was Edburga?

Cerdic

Even she, —

The King's Edburga. If I have been craven,
Speak out thy hurt. For I will hear, and learn.

*[He lights the lamp also, from the lanthorn;
then stands with his arms folded, looking at
her calmly. She begins with a cold irony
that grows passionate.]*

Edburga

Ay, learn. — If that Edburga drave thee here,
Bethink thee, that Edburga was a woman.
Learn that there was some strength around her
then,

Stronger than thou, to drive thee from his
heart —

Ælfric the King's — and from the city gate!
The woman's strength, the one might that is
Woman.

And though ye give and take us as your own,
What is it that ye flee from and ye fear?
Dreading this . . . softness, once it be unchained!
Con thy blank heart. For I will write in it
The runes that might unriddle thee the world;
And thou shalt ponder them, one little hour,
Looking upon me. Nay, I do not come,
Save but in hatred. Thou art safe from all
Thy heart can fear, and long for — and despise!

I hate thee; and I tell thee; and I come
To speak thee sooth, and at my going hence
To leave full goodly token that I hate.
But thou, look back and be the wiser, — thou!
When I did enter, ere we came to speech,
What was it bowed thy knees before me here
Against thy will? Thou'rt dumb. Why then,
 poor clod,
What, but this weird which thou couldst never
 face?
This little power-and-glory-all-for-naught!
What save one Woman? And that one, to
 thee,
The basest woman-weed in all the world!
Edburga!

Cerdic

Ah, my God! No, no.——

Edburga

The King's —

The King's Edburga!

Cerdic (apart)

Ah, forgive — forgive . . .

Edburga

Prayest me now forgiveness?

Cerdic (sternly)

Nay, not thee!

Not thee.

Edburga

Then haply heaven: that thou wert moved
By this poor beauty that I wear upon me?
Waste not thy prayer. The peril that I bring
Is nothing strange; 'tis old and grim and free.
Have I not said, I come to tell thee of it?
And what I am that reckon with thee?

Cerdic

Speak.

Edburga

I am Edburga, and the daughter of Ulf.
My mother was a slave. For she was sold,
And given in her youth unto Svanfleda,
Sister of Ulf, — a just and holy woman;
Who bought and set her free, for Ulf to wed, —
And had it written in the gospel-book, —
When that his heart clave to her. That, O
monk,
Thou canst but hear, not heed! And I was
grown,
When Ulf came to be made an ealdorman.
And Bertric would have taken me to wife,
Save that I came before the eyes of Ælfric
The King; and so . . .
— What are you, men and monks,
That you may give us unto such an one
To bind your lands together? Or to bring

The sum of twenty spears or more, to follow
You, at the man-hunt? Women bring you forth,
As Darkness cherishes the doomful light
Of the Sun, that being grown, shakes his bright
locks

And puts all to the sword! I'll not be given
To Bertric, would that Bertric have me now: —
I, a free-woman, and gladlier free,
That being yet unborn, I was a slave!
I am a creature rooted in the dark,
But born to sunlight and the noble air.
I will to give; and I will not be given.
I fear not right nor left, nor east, nor west;
Nor thee! For that I have is all mine own
To give or keep. And I am all I have.
And I am Ælfric's, — for a kingly gift.

*[A bugle sounds distantly. Neither hears as
they face each other fiercely.]*

I reckon no more. But thou, thou shadow-thing,
Unwitting what or men or shadows be,
And hearing of my name and how time sped,
And fearing for the council and the peace,
Thou wouldst have hurled my one gift of myself
Into the dust; and called all men to see,
And curse and stone me hence: and if thou
couldst! —

As there were no degrees 'twixt mire and me.

O thou wise Cerdic, hear the end of this.
For thy 'King's Peace,' thou hast so ploughed
the state,
And turned the people's heart against their
King,
That now they clamor for their holy man!
Like rain and snow, two names make dim the
air
With 'Cerdic' and 'Edburga'!

Cerdic

I knew not this.

Edburga

Quoth he! Thou hast it, now. Yet even so,
Truly, thou wilt not come again, to rule! . . .
Thou piece of craft, I know thee. Dost thou
think
Cerdic shall win? Or, haply, base Edburga?

.
The King is here, without . . . and nigh at hand,
Coming with torches.

[Lifts her hand to listen.]

. . . Ay!

Cerdic (dazed)

The King is come. . . .

Edburga

Yea, so. — Tho' thou be traitor, he's a King;
And thou hast been a one-time counsellor.

He comes to say farewell . . . And I am first,
To shew thee something of this world, before
Thou tak'st thy leave for that far other world
Thou knowst so well; — and liker home for
thee,

Than this warm Earth so full of seas and sun, —
Too golden — like my hair! . . .

The tide is in.

It was low water when I walked across;
But I did seal my name upon the shore!

Cerdic

Ælfric is come . . .

Edburga

I have said. — And Ælfric's men.

Cerdic

Thou speakst not truly. Ælfric is a king,
Though he be young.

Edburga

But, — Cerdic or Edburga!

Cerdic

Not thus for Ælfric! He bore love to me.

Edburga

Ay, long ago. . . . For any of the earls
He would not so have done. It was for me.
Save thyself, Holy Cerdic! —

[*She points to the door with ironic invitation.*

Cerdic turns towards the bench, and grasp-

*ing his mallet, looks on the carven stone,
lifting the cloth from it. She sees with
amusement.*

Let us see

How monks may fight! . . .

*[He covers the stone and faces her with sudden
indignation, still grasping his mallet.*

Stout tools they look: and thou hast need of
them.

If thou wilt cling to such a meagre life,
Who scants a moment? Surely not the King!
Yet dost thou look not now, as when I came,
Kneeling adaze before me! And belike
I seemed not thus to thee. — What I did seem,
I wonder yet, O blind man with new eyes! —
I wonder yet. —

*[The Abbey bell sounds faintly far off. It is
followed by confused sounds of approach.*

Cerdic

Hear, then! Thou sayst truth: —

How much of truth I may have time to tell
thee,

Thou bitter truth, Edburga! When I kneeled,
Not knowing, — for my heart was worn with
dreams,

Mine eyes were worn with watching, — I had
prayed

Only to hear one knock upon the door;
Only to see one Vision, that I strove
To carve there on the stone. . . . There came a
knock,

There stood one . . . at the door. — And I looked
up,

And saw in thee what I had prayed to see; —
And knew not what I saw, believing thee —
God rede to me this day in Paradise
The meaning of that mock! — believing thee
The Vision . . . of all pity and all grace,
The Blessèd One, the Mother of Our Lord! —

Edburga

Out! Mock me not. — Be still —

Cerdic (with anguish)

The Blessèd One! —

Believing thee . . . the Mother of Our Lord! . . .

*[Edburga gives a strange cry and falls
huddled against the door, with her veil
gathered over her face, as Cerdic breaks
the stone into fragments. — There is a
bugle-blast without, and the sound of voices
and steel; then a blow upon the door.*

Cerdic hurls away the mallet.

Could spears bite out this broken heart of a fool,
And tear it from me! —

Bid them in.

Voice (without)

Come forth!

[*Enter Ælfric alone. The open door shows the torches outside. Cerdic faces him, sternly motionless. Edburga is crouched by the doorway, her face covered. The King looks from one to other in amazement.*

Ælfric

Where was thy signal? Twice I sounded horn.

[*To Cerdic*

I bade thee forth. Why cam'st thou not?

Is Cerdic afraid to die? —

... What makes Edburga here?

Thou wert to give me signal. ... What befell?

Thou cowering in thy veil? When have I seen

This thing? — Speak! —

Edburga (faintly)

Ælfric ...

Ælfric

Up! Rise up and speak.

Come forth, out of thy veil!

Edburga

I cannot ...

Ælfric

Come. —

... Look up. —

Edburga

Let be. . . . Ah, ah! . . .

Ælfric (fiercely)

Out . . . from thy veil!

*[Still she shrinks, covered. He turns on
Cerdic, drawing his sword with a cry.*

Thou diest! —

*[Edburga flings herself against him and
clasps his knees, reaching up towards his
arm.*

Edburga

No, Ælfric, no. But give me time! — Not
yet.

Let be . . . I do not know . . . I do not
know . . .

I cannot tell thee why . . .

Ælfric

Thou wilt not speak?

Edburga

Yea, soon. . . . Be patient, . . . hear!

[In a gasping whisper.

. . . Put up thy sword.

Ælfric

Thou plead for him? Am I become thy fool?

For he it was so called me, on a time! —

Speak. — Hath one hour stricken thy mind from
thee?

Art thou Edburga? And am I the King?
What was the spell? — For whom was ambush
set?

Gods! — I would make all sure, but I am loath
To shame the King I was, before my thanes.

*[He pushes the door shut and stands against
it, holding his sword drawn.]*

Answer, Edburga. — Was't for me or thee,
I took this errand on me? Thou hast said
One of you twain must live, the other die. —
To death with him.

Edburga

It shall dishonor thee.

Ælfric

Bid in the hands to do it. For that cause
Thou wouldst have had them hither. Let them
be

Dishonored! So: — was it not all thy deed?

Edburga

Mine, mine, — not thine! But thou, undo my
deed,
And cast it from thee. — He hath spoken
true . . .

Not all, not all! — But yet, 'tis I have clasped
This mantle of dishonor round thy neck,
That is so foul upon thee. I saw not; —
But now I do behold . . . and all is strange.

Yea, I hate Cerdic . . . and I hate myself . . .
I bade thee do it, and I pray thee now,
Hear me again, and do it not!

Ælfric (as she clings to him again)

Edburga!

Edburga

All I have asked of thee, — unto this hour,
Put it away from thee and me, . . . away!

Ælfric

Edburga!

[She stands up, with a cry]

Edburga

Doubt me not. Thou dost believe!

I loved thee, and I love thee, and . . . I love
thee. —

I loved thee that thou wert the kingliest man;
And I have made thee lesser. Be not . . .
less.

The people love thee yet. — Ah, but they shall!
I did not know . . . but now . . .

[Wistfully]

Thou wilt believe?

Undo me from thy neck. Cast me away.

I love thee, and I know thou didst love me.

Cast me away! —

[Cerdic stretches his arms out to them, suddenly illumined with great joy.]

Cerdic

O, woman! — child. . . . God's child.

[*They turn to him, perplexed, Edburga sobbing at the feet of Ælfric.*]

Wilt thou forgive?

Edburga (doubting)

Forgive thee, Cerdic? . . . Ah! . . .

Cerdic

Then hear me; and forgive when I have
done.

I took thee for a bitter mockery
Of my fair dream. Thou wert to me one
sent

To bow my pride, who deemed my prayer could
win

The blessèd Vision . . .

So I let break the image that I strove

To make of her; for that it was dishonored.

I brake it . . . and my heart was sore abased. —

Blest be that shame and sharpness! This thy
word

Makes me to know the answer to the prayer,

Now that I see, through all these sevenfold
veils . . .

The Likeness! . . .

Edburga

Nay, . . . to Her?

Cerdic

Even to her;

Yea, and to Him who did so love the world: —
Love, the one Likeness. . . .

Ælfric (after a silence)

Cerdic, thou shamest me.

*[He puts up his sword. Edburga hides her
face against his knees.]*

Cerdic

Lift up her head, and set her by thy side. . . .

Wed her. Whom thou hast humbled, lift her
up.

The gift that thou hast taken, hold it high.

Ælfric

Come with us, Cerdic. Be at our right hand.

Cerdic

Not yet. For I have lived within a dream

Too long. . . . Not yet know I enough of God, —
Or men.

*[As they turn to go, Edburga leaves the King's
arms irresolutely. She draws near the
bench and gathers up the fragments of the
broken stone to lay them together with a
half-fearful touch, not looking at Cerdic.
Exeunt Edburga and the King. Cerdic
follows them to the threshold, looking out,
his hands held after them in farewell.]*

There is a sharp command. The torches go, and the footsteps on the pebbles. A gust of wind blows suddenly; and Cerdic re-enters with a hurt sea-gull. There is the faint sound of the Abbey bell once. Cerdic comes slowly down towards the bench and the stone fragments, his face set, and the sea-gull held close to his breast.

Ah, Thou! — Have pity on all broken wings.

CURTAIN

THE PIPER
A Play in Four Acts

(Published in 1909)

The Piper was selected as the prize play for the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1910 and had its first performance there, at the Memorial Theatre, on July 26th, 1910. The first performance in America took place at The New Theatre, New York, on January 30th, 1911.

Anno 1284

Am Dage Johannis et Pauli

War der 26 Junii

Dorch einen Piper mit allerley Farbe
bekledet

Gewesen CXXX Kinder verledet

Binnen Hamelen geboren

To Calvarie bi den Hoppen verloren

[THE HAMELIN INSCRIPTION]

CHARACTERS

THE PIPER

MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Strolling Players

JACOBUS the Burgomeister

KURT the Syndic

PETER the Cobbler

HANS the Butcher

AXEL the Smith

MARTIN the Watch

PETER the Sacristan

ANSELM, a young priest

OLD CLAUS, a miser

TOWN CRIER

Men of Hamelin

JAN

HANSEL

ILSE

TRUDE

RUDI

Children

C H A R A C T E R S

VERONIKA, the wife of Kurt

BARBARA, daughter of Jacobus

WIFE OF HANS the Butcher

WIFE OF AXEL the Smith

WIFE OF MARTIN the Watch

OLD URSULA

Burghers, nuns, priests, and children

SCENE: HAMELIN ON THE WESER, 1284 A. D.

SCENES

| | | |
|----------|---|--|
| ACT I. | | <i>The market-place in Hamelin</i> |
| ACT II. | { | SCENE I. <i>Inside the 'Hollow Hill'</i> |
| | { | SCENE II. <i>The Cross-ways</i> |
| ACT III. | | <i>The Cross-ways</i> |
| ACT IV. | | <i>The market-place in Hamelin</i> |

One week is supposed to elapse between Acts I and II.

Acts II and III occupy one day.

Act IV concerns the following morning.



The Piper

ACT I

SCENE: *The market-place of Hamelin. Right, the Minster, with an open shrine (right centre) containing a large sculptured figure of the Christ. Right, farther front, the house of KURT; and other narrow house-fronts. Left, the Rathaus, and (down) the home of JACOBUS. Front, to left and right, are corner-houses with projecting stories and casement windows. At the centre rear, a narrow street leads away between houses whose gables all but meet overhead.*

It is late summer afternoon, with a holiday crowd. In the open casements, front (right and left, opposite each other), sit OLD URSULA and OLD CLAUS, looking on at men and things. — In the centre of the place now stands a

*rude wooden Ark with a tented top: and out of the openings (right and left) appear the **artificial** heads of animals, worn by the players inside. One is a Bear (inhabited by MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER); one is a large Reynard-the-Fox, later apparent as the PIPER. Close by is the mediæval piece of stage-property known as 'Hell-Mouth,' i. e. a red painted cave with a jaw-like opening, into which a mountebank dressed in scarlet (CHEAT-THE-DEVIL) is poking 'Lost Souls' with a pitchfork.*

BARBARA loiters by the tent. VERONIKA, the sad young wife of KURT, watches from the house steps, left, keeping her little lame boy, Jan, close beside her.

Shouts of delight greet the end of the show, — a Noah's Ark miracle-play of the rudest; and the Children continue to scream with joy whenever an Animal looks out of the Ark.

Men and women pay scant attention either to JACOBUS, when he speaks (himself none too sober) — from his doorstep, prompted by the frowning KURT, — or yet to ANSELM, the priest, who stands forth with lifted hands, at the close of the miracle-play.

ANSELM



ND you, who heed the colors of this
show,

Look to your laughter! — It doth
body forth

A Judgment that may take you
unaware, —

Sun-struck with mirth, like unto chattering
leaves

Some wind of wrath shall scourge to nothing-
ness.

HANS, AXEL, AND OTHERS

Hurrah, Hurrah!

JACOBUS

And now, good townsmen all,

Seeing we stand delivered and secure

As once yon chosen creatures of the Ark,

For a similitude, — our famine gone,

Our plague of rats and mice, —

CROWD

Hurrah — hurrah!

JACOBUS

'T is meet we render thanks more soberly —

HANS *the Butcher*

Soberly, soberly, ay! —

JACOBUS

For our deliverance
And now, ye wit, it will be full three days
Since we beheld — our late departed pest. —

OLD URSULA

[*putting out an ear-trumpet*]

What does he say?

REYNARD

[*from the Ark*]

— Oh, how felicitous!

HANS' WIFE

He's only saying there be no more rats.

JACOBUS

[with oratorical endeavor]

Three days it is; and not one mouse, — one
mouse,

One mouse, I say! — No-o-o! Quiet . . . as a
mouse.

[Resuming]

And now . . .

CROWD

Long live Jacobus! —

JACOBUS

You have seen
Noah and the Ark, most aptly happening by
With these same play-folk. You have marked
the Judgment.

You all have seen the lost souls sent to —
Hell —

And, nothing more to do. —

[KURT prompts him]

Yes, yes. — And now . . .

[HANS the Butcher steps out of his group.]

HANS *the Butcher*

Hath no man seen the Piper? — Please your
worships.

OTHERS

Ay, ay, so!

— Ay, where is he?

— Ho, the Piper!

JACOBUS

Piper, my good man?

HANS *the Butcher*

— He that charmed the rats!

OTHERS

Yes, yes, — that charmed the rats!

JACOBUS

[*piously*]

Why, no man knows. —

Which proves him such a random instrument
As Heaven doth sometimes send us, to our use;
Or, as I do conceive, no man at all, —
A man of air; or, I would say — delusion.
He'll come no more.

REYNARD

[from the Ark]

Eh? — Oh, indeed, Meaow!

JACOBUS

'T is clearest providence. The rats are gone.
The man is gone. And there is nought to
pay,
Save peaceful worship.

[Pointing to the Minster.]

REYNARD

[sarcastically]

Oh, indeed, — Meaow!

*[Sudden chorus of derisive animal noises from
the Ark, delighting PEOPLE and CHILDREN.]*

KURT

Silence, — you strollers there! Or I will have you
Gaoled, one and all.

PEOPLE

No, Kurt the Syndic, no!

BARBARA

[to Jacobus]

No, no! Ah, father, bid them stay awhile
And play it all again. — Or, if not all,
Do let us see that same good youth again,
Who swallowed swords — between the Ark
Preserved
And the Last Judgment!

REYNARD

Michael-the-Sword-Eater,
Laurels for thee!

*[The BEAR disappears: MICHAEL puts out
his own head, and gazes fixedly at BAR-
BARA.]*

CHILDREN

Oh, can't we see the animals in the Ark?
Again? Oh, can't we see it all again?

ILSE

Oh, leave out Noah! And let's have only Bears
And Dromedaries, and the other ones! —
[General confusion.]

KURT

Silence!

JACOBUS

Good people — you have had your shows;
And it is meet, that having held due feast,
Both with our market and this Miracle,
We bring our holiday to close with prayer
And public thanks unto Saint Willibald, —
Upon whose day the rats departed thence.

REYNARD

[loudly]

Saint Willibald!

BEAR

— Saint Willibald!

OTHER ANIMALS

[looking out]

} Saint Willibald!
{ Saint! Oh!

CROWD

Saint Willibald! — And what had he to do
With ridding us o' rats?

HANS *the Butcher*

'T was the Piping Man
Who came and stood here in the market-
place,
And swore to do it for one thousand guilders!

PETER *the Cobbler*

Ay, and he did it, too! — Saint Willibald!
[*Renewed uproar round the tent.*]

KURT

[*to Jacobus*]

Drive out those mountebanks! 'T is ever so.
Admit them to the town and you must pay
Their single show with riotings a week. —
Look yonder at your daughter.

[*BARBARA lingers by the Ark-Tent, gazing
with girlish interest at MICHAEL, who
gazes at her, his bear-head in his hand for
the moment.*]

JACOBUS

Barbara!

[*She turns back, with an angry glance at
KURT.*]

AXEL *the Smith*

[*doggedly to them*]

By your leave, Masters! I would like to know,
How did Saint Willibald prevail with the
rats? —

That would I like to know. I, who ha' made
Of strong wrought traps, two hundred, thirty-
nine,
Two hundred, thirty-nine.

REYNARD

[*calling*].

And so would I!

HANS *the Butcher*

So please your worships, may it please the
Crier,
Now we be here, — to cry the Piping Man —

PETER *the Cobbler*

A stranger-man, gay-clad, — in divers colors!
Because he, with said piping —

HANS *the Butcher*

— Drave away

The horde of rats!

PETER *the Cobbler*

[*sagely*]

To our great benefit;

And we be all just men.

OTHERS

Ay, ay! — Amen!

WOMEN

Amen, Our Lady and the blessed Saints!

JACOBUS

Why, faith, good souls, if ye will have him
cried,

So be it. — But the ways of Heaven are
strange!

Mark how our angel of deliverance came, —
Or it may be, Saint Willibald himself, —
Most piedly clothed, even as the vilest player! —
And straight ascended from us, to the clouds!

But cry him, if you will. — Peace to your lungs! —

He will not come.

[KURT *wrathfully consults with* JACOBUS,
then signals to Crier.]

CRIER

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

Whereas, now three days gone, our Plague of
Rats

Was wholly driven hence, our City cleansed,
Our peace restored after sore threat of famine,
By a Strange Man who came not back again,
Now, therefore, if this Man have ears to hear,
Let him stand forth. — Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[*Trumpet.* — PEOPLE *gaze up and down the little streets.* — REYNARD *steps out of the Ark and comes down slowly, with a modest air:* — KURT *points him out, threateningly, and the CROWD bursts into derisive laughter.* — He *doffs his animal-head at leisure, showing a sparkling dark-eyed face.*]

ALL

The Man! the Man!

KURT AND JACOBUS

The Devil! — 'T is —

ALL

— THE PIPER!

[*The PIPER regards them all with debonair satisfaction; then reverses his head-piece and holds it out upside-down, with a confident smile.*]

PIPER

Three days of rest, your worships, you have had.
I see no signs of famine hereabout.

The rats are gone, even to the nethermost tail:
And I've fulfilled my bargain. Is it granted?

[*Murmurs, then cheers of "Ay, Ay, PIPER!"
from the crowd.*]

Thank'ee. — My thousand guilders, an you
please.

JACOBUS

One thou — Come, come! This was no sober
bargain. —

No man in reason could —

PIPER

One thousand guilders.

KURT

One thousand rogueries!

JACOBUS

[to PIPER]

You jest too far.

AXEL

Lucky, if he get aught! — Two hundred traps,
And nine, and thirty! By Saint Willibald,
When was I paid?

AXEL'S WIFE

Say, now!

PIPER

. . . One thousand guilders.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Give him an hundred.

HANS *the Butcher*

Double!

HANS' WIFE

You were fool
To make agreement with him. — Ask old Claus.
He has the guilders; and his house was full
O' rats!

OLD CLAUS

[shaking his stick from the window]

You jade! And I that hoard, and save,
And lay by all I have from year to year,
To build my monument when I am gone,
A fine new tomb there, in Saint Boniface!
And I to pay for all your city rats!

OLD URSULA

[leaning out, opposite]

Right, neighbor, right well said! — Piper, hark
here.
Piper, how did ye charm the rats away?

PIPER

[coming down]

The rats were led — by Cu-ri-os-ity.
'T is so with many rats; and all old women; —
Saving your health!

JACOBUS

No thought for public weal,
In this base grasping on —

PIPER

One thousand guilders.

KURT

[*contemptuously*]

For piping!

PIPER

Shall I pipe them back again?

WOMEN

Merciful heaven! { Good Saint Boniface!
 { Good Saint Willibald!
 { Peter and Paul defend us!

HANS *the Butcher*

No, no; no fear o' that. The rats be drowned.
We saw them with our eyes.

PIPER

Now who shall say
There is no resurrection for a mouse?

KURT

—Do you but crop this fellow's ears! —

VERONIKA

[*from the steps*]

Ah, Kurt!

JACOBUS

[*to him, blandly*]

Deal patiently, good neighbor. All is well.

[*To the PIPER*]

Why do you name a price so laughable,
My man? Call you to mind; you have no
claim, —

No scrip to show. You cling upon —

PIPER

[*sternly*]

Your word.

JACOBUS

I would say — just —

PIPER

Your word.

JACOBUS

Upon —

PIPER

Your word.

Sure, 't was a rotten parchment!

JACOBUS

This is a base,

Conniving miser!

PIPER

[turning proudly]

Stand forth, Cheat-the-Devil!

*[Up steps the DEVIL in red. PEOPLE shrink,
and then come closer.]*

Be not afeard. He pleased you all, of late.

He hath no sting. — So, boy! Do off thy head. —

*[CHEAT-THE-DEVIL doffs his red headdress
and stands forth, a pale and timorous
youth, gentle and half-witted.]*

Michael, stand forth!

[MICHAEL comes down, bear-head in hand.]

BARBARA

[regarding him sadly]

That goodly sword-eater!

PIPER

[*defiantly*]

So, Michael, so. — These be two friends of mine.

Pay now an even third to each of us.

Or, to content your doubts, to each of these

Do you pay here and now, five hundred
guilders.

Who gets it matters little, for us friends.

But you will pay the sum, friend. You will
pay! —

HANS, AXEL, AND CROWD

Come, there's an honest fellow. Ay, now, **pay!**

— There's a good friend. — And would I **had**
the same.

— One thousand guilders?

— No, too much.

— No, no.

KURT

Pay jugglers? — With a rope apiece!

JACOBUS

Why — so —

PIPER

They are my friends; and they shall share with
me.

'T is time that Hamelin reckoned us for men;
— Hath ever dealt with us as we were vermin.
Now have I rid you of the other sort —
Right you that score! —

KURT

These outcasts!

PIPER

[*hotly*]

Say you so?

Michael, my man! Which of you here will try
With glass or fire, with him?

MICHAEL

[*sullenly*]

No, no more glass, to-day!

PIPER

Then fire and sword!

[*They back away.*]

So! — And there's not one man
In Hamelin, here, so honest of his word.
Stroller! A pretty choice you leave us. — Quit
This strolling life, or stroll into a cage!

What do you offer him? A man eats fire —
Swords, glass, young April frogs —

CHILDREN

Do it again!

Do it again!

PIPER

You say to such a man, —
'Come be a monk! A weaver!' Pretty choice.
Here's Cheat-the-Devil, now.

PETER *the Cobbler*

But what's his name?

PIPER

He does n't know. What would you? Nor do I.
But for the something he has seen of life,
Making men merry, he'd know something
more!

The gentlest devil ever spiked Lost Souls
Into Hell-mouth, — for nothing-by-the-day!

OLD URSULA

[*with her ear-trumpet*]

Piper, why do you call him Cheat-the-Devil?

PIPER

Because his deviltry is all a cheat:—
He is no devil, — but a gentle heart!
— Friend Michael here hath played the Devil,
betimes,
Because he can so bravely breathe out fire.
He plied the pitchfork so we yelped for
mercy, —
He reckoned not the stoutness of his arm!—
But Cheat-the-Devil here, — he would not hurt
Why — Kurt the Syndic — thrusting him in
hell. [Laughter.]

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

[unhappily]

No, no — I will not hurt him!

PIPER

[soothingly to him]

Merry, boy!

[To the townsfolk]

And, — if ye will have reasons, good, — ye see, —
I want — one thousand guilders.

JACOBUS

In all surety,
Payment you'll have, my man. But —

HANS *the Butcher*

As to's friends, —

An that yon Devil be as feat wi' his hands
As he be slow o' tongue, why, I will take him
For prentice. Wife, — now that would smack o'
pride!

PETER *the Cobbler*

I'll take this fellow that can swallow fire.
He's somewhat old for me. But he can learn
My trade. — A pretty fellow!

PIPER

And your trade?

PETER *the Cobbler*

Peter the cobbler. —

MICHAEL

I? What, I? Make shoes?

[*Proudly*]

I swallow fire.

PIPER

Enough.

BARBARA
[*aside, bitterly*]

I'll not believe it.

PIPER
[*to HANS*]

Your trade?

HANS *the Butcher*
I'm Hans the Butcher.

MICHAEL

Butcher?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL
[*unhappily*]

Butcher!

Oh, no! I could n't hurt them.

[*Loud laughter.*]

BUTCHER'S WIFE

'T is a fool!

[*The PIPER motions to MICHAEL and CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, who during the following join the other player-folk, strike their tent, pack their bundles, and wheel off the barrows that have served them for an Ark, leaving*

the space clear before the Shrine. Exeunt Strollers, all but MICHAEL, who hangs about, still gazing at BARBARA.]

JACOBUS

Good people, we have wasted time enow.
You see this fellow, that he has no writ —

PIPER

Why not, then? 'T was a bargain. If your
word
Hold only when 't is writ —

KURT

We cannot spend
Clerkship on them that neither write nor read.
What good would parchment do thee?

JACOBUS

My good man —

PIPER

Who says I cannot read? — Who says I cannot?

OLD CLAUS

Piper, don't tell me you can read in books!

PIPER

[at bay]

Books! Where's a book? Shew me a book,
I say!

OLD URSULA

The Holy Book! Bring that — or he'll bewitch
you.

PIPER

Oh, never fear. I charm but fools and chil-
dren;

Now that the rats are gone. — Bring me a Book:
A big one! —

[*Murmurs. The PIPER defiant. The crowd moves towards the Minster. Enter ANSELM the priest, with a little acolyte, — the two bearing a large illuminated Gospel-book. ANSELM, eyeing the PIPER gravely, opens the book, which the boy supports on his head and shoulders.*]

PIPER

Ho, 't is too heavy! Come, you cherub-head,
Here's too much laid upon one guardian angel!

[*Beckons another small boy, and sets the book on their two backs.*]

Well? — well? What now?

[*He looks in frank bewilderment at the eager crowd.*]

CROWD

Read, read!

KURT

He cannot read.

PIPER

[*to ANSELM*]

Turn — turn — there's nothing there.

[*ANSELM turns pages. PIPER looks on blankly.*]

. . . Ah, turn again!

The big red Letter. —

[*He takes his pipe from his belt.*]

No, the green! The green one. So.

[*Starts to pipe, looking on the book.*]

CROWD

{ Sure 't is a mad-man!
 But hear him piping!
 What is he doing?

PIPER

[puzzled at their mirth]

What the green one says. —

[A burst of laughter from the crowd. JAN, the little lame boy on the steps, reaches his arms out suddenly and gives a cry of delight.]

JAN

Oh, I love the Man!

[He goes, with his crutch, to the PIPER, who turns and gathers him close.]

JACOBUS

[to the People]

Leave off this argument.

KURT

In, — to the minster.

JACOBUS

Saint Willibald!

PIPER

[in a rage]

That Saint! —

KURT

Hence, wandering dog!

PIPER

Oho! — Well, every Saint may have his day.¹
But there are dog-days coming. — Eh, your
worship?

[*To ANSELM, suddenly*]

You, there! You — Brother — Father — Uncle
— You!

Speak! Will you let them in, to say their
prayers

And mock me through their fingers? — Tell
these men

To settle it, among their mouldy pockets,
Whether they keep their oath. Then will I go.

KURT

[*savagely*]

Away with you! —

ANSELM

The Piper should be heard;
Ye know it well. Render to Cæsar, therefore,
That which is Cæsar's.

PIPER

— Give the Devil his due!

JACOBUS

[warily]

We must take counsel over such a sum.

[*Beckoning others, he and KURT go into the Rathaus, followed by all the men. Exit ANSELM with the Holy Book into the Minster. — The children play Mouse, to and fro, round about the PIPER. — The women, some of them, spin on the doorsteps, with little hand distaffs, or stand about, gossiping.*

The PIPER wipes his forehead and goes up slowly (centre) to drink from the fountain at the foot of the Shrine. — MICHAEL, like one in a dream, comes down towards BARBARA, who gazes back at him, fascinated, through her laughter.]

BARBARA

Is it for pay you loiter, Master Player?
Were you not paid enough?

MICHAEL

No. — One more look.

BARBARA

Here, then. — Still not enough?

MICHAEL

No! One more smile.

BARBARA

[*agitated*]

Why would you have me smile?

MICHAEL

[*passionately*]

Oh, when you smiled,
It was — it was like sunlight coming through
Some window there,

[*Pointing to the Minster*]

— some vision of Our Lady.

[*She drops her flowers. — He picks them up
and gives them back slowly.*]

BARBARA

Who are you? You are some one in disguise.

MICHAEL

[*bitterly*]

A man — that passes for a mountebank.

BARBARA

[*eagerly*]

I knew!

MICHAEL

What then?

BARBARA

Thou art of noble birth.

'T is some disguise, this playing with the fire!

MICHAEL

Yes. — For to-day, I lord it with the fire.

But it hath burned me, here.

[*Touching his breast.*]

[*Overcome for the moment, she draws away. —*

The PIPER, coming down, speaks stealthily to MICHAEL, who is still gazing.]

PIPER

For all our sakes!

There is bad weather breeding. — Take to thy heels.

[BARBARA turns back to see MICHAEL withdrawing reluctantly, and throws a rose to him with sudden gayety.]

BARBARA

Farewell to you, Sword-Swallower! — farewell!

MICHAEL

[looking back]

Farewell to you, my Lady, in-the-Moon.

[Exit.]

[JAN clings once more to the PIPER, while the other children hang about. Enter VERONIKA from her house. She goes towards her boy.]

VERONIKA

Darling. —

PIPER

[drawing nearer]

Is this your Boy?

VERONIKA

Ay, he is mine;

My only one. He loved thy piping so.

PIPER

And I loved his.

HANS' WIFE

[stridently]

Poor little boy! He's lame!

PIPER

'T is all of us are lame! But he, he flies.

VERONIKA

Jan, stay here if you will, and hear the pipe,
At Church-time.

PIPER

[to him]

Wilt thou?

JAN

[softly]

Mother lets me stay
Here with the Lonely Man.

PIPER

The Lonely Man?

[JAN *points to the Christ in the Shrine.* VERONIKA *crosses herself.* The PIPER *looks long at the little boy.*]

VERONIKA

He always calls Him so.

PIPER

And so would I.

VERONIKA

It grieves him that the Head is always bowed,
And stricken. But he loves more to be here
Than yonder in the church.

PIPER

And so do I.

VERONIKA

What would you, darling, with the Lonely Man?
What do you wait to see?

JAN

[*shyly*]

To see Him smile.

[*The women murmur. The PIPER comes down
further to speak to VERONIKA.*]

PIPER

You are some foreign woman. Are you not?
Never from Hamelin!

VERONIKA

No.

AXEL'S WIFE

[*to her child*]

Then run along.

And ask the Piper if he'll play again
The tune that charmed the rats.

ANOTHER

They might come back!

OLD URSULA

[*calling from her window*]

Piper! I want the tune that charmed the rats!
If they come back, I'll have my grandson play
it.

PIPER

I pipe but for the children.

ILSE

[dropping her doll and picking it up]

Oh, do pipe

Something for Fridolin!

HANSEL

Oh, pipe at me!

Now I'm a mouse! I'll eat you up! Rr—rr! —

CHILDREN

Oh, pipe! Oh, play! Oh, play and make us dance!

Oh, play, and make us run away from school!

PIPER

Why, what are these?

CHILDREN

[scampering round him]

We're mice, we're mice, we're mice! . . .

We're mice, we're mice! We'll eat up everything!

MARTIN'S WIFE

[*calling*]

'T is church-time. La, what will the neighbors say?

ILSE

[*Waving her doll*]

Oh, please do play something for Fridolin!

AXEL'S WIFE

Do hear the child. She's quite the little mother!

PIPER

A little mother? Ugh! How horrible.

That fairy thing, that princess, — no, that Child!

A little mother?

[*To her*]

Drop the ugly thing!

MARTIN'S WIFE

Now, on my word! and what's amiss with mothers?

Are mothers horrible?

[*The PIPER is struck with painful memories.*]

PIPER

No, no. But — care
And want and pain and age . . .
[*Turns back to them with a bitter change of voice*]
And penny-wealth, —
And penny-counting.— Penny prides and fears—
Of what the neighbors say the neighbors say!—

MARTIN'S WIFE

And were you born without a mother, then?

ALL

Yes, you there! Ah, I told you! He's no man. }
He's of the devil.

MARTIN'S WIFE

Who was your mother, then?

PIPER

[*fiercely*]

Mine! — Nay, I do not know. For when I saw
her,
She was a thing so trodden, lost and sad,

I cannot think that she was ever young,
Save in the cherishing voice. — She was a
stroller.

[The women draw aside furtively, two by two, and listen unwillingly from the door-steps with looks of dread and aversion, as the PIPER continues with growing passion.]

She was a stroller. — And she starved and
sang;

And like the wind, she wandered, and was
cold,

Outside your lighted windows, and fled by,
Storm-hunted, trying to outstrip the snow,
South, south, and homeless as a broken bird, —
Limping and hiding! — And she fled, and
laughed,

And kept me warm; and died! To you, a
Nothing;

Nothing, forever, oh, you well-housed mothers!
As always, always for the lighted windows
Of all the world, the Dark outside is nothing;
And all that limps and hides there in the
dark;

Famishing, — broken, — lost!

And I have sworn
For her sake and for all, that I will have
Some justice, all so late, for wretched men,
Out of these same smug towns that drive us
forth

After the show! — Or scheme to cage us up
Out of the sunlight; like a squirrel's heart
Torn out and drying in the market-place.
My mother! Do you know what mothers
are? —

Your children! Do you know them? Ah, not you!
'There's not one here but it would follow me,
For all your bleating!

AXEL'S WIFE

Kuno, come away!

[The children cling to him. He smiles down triumphantly.]

PIPER

Oho, Oho! Look you? — You preach — I pipe!

[Reënter the men, with KURT and JACOBUS, from the Rathaus, murmuring dubiously.]

[The PIPER sets down JAN and stands forth, smiling.]

JACOBUS

[smoothly]

H'm! My good man, we have faithfully
debated

Whether your vision of so great a sum
Might be fulfilled, — as by some miracle.

But no. The moneys we administer
Will not allow it; nor the common weal.

Therefore, for your late service, here you have
Full fifteen guilders,

[Holding forth a purse]

and a pretty sum

Indeed, for piping!

KURT

[ominously]

Take them!

JACOBUS

Either that,

Or, to speak truly, nothing!

[The PIPER is motionless]

Come, come. Nay, count them, if you will.

KURT

Time goes!

PIPER

Ay. And your oath?

KURT

No more; Enough.

[There is a sound of organ music from the Minster.]

VERONIKA

[beseechingly]

Ah, Kurt!

KURT

[savagely to the crowd]

What do ye, mewling of this fellow's rights?
He hath none! — Wit ye well, he is a stroller,
A wastrel, and the shadow of a man!
Ye waste the day and dally with the law.
Such have no rights; not in their life nor body!
We are in no wise bound. Nothing is his.
He may not carry arms; nor have redress
For any harm that men should put on him,
Saving to strike a shadow on the wall!
He is a Nothing, by the statute-book;
And, by the book, so let him live or die,
Like to a masterless dog!

[*The PIPER stands motionless with head up-raised, not looking at KURT. The people, half-cowed, half-doubting, murmur and draw back. Lights appear in the Minster; the music continues. KURT and JACOBUS lead in the people. JACOBUS picks up the money-purse and takes it with him.*]

VOICES

[*laughing, drunkenly*]

One thousand guilders to a 'masterless dog'!

[*Others laugh too, pass by, with pity and derision for the PIPER, and echoes of 'MASTERLESS DOG!' Exeunt WOMEN and MEN to the Minster.*]

Only the children are left, dancing round the motionless figure of the PIPER.]

CHILDREN

Oh, pipe again! Oh, pipe and make us dance!

Oh, pipe and make us run away from school!

Oh, pipe and make believe we are the mice!

[*He looks down at them. He looks up at the houses. Then he signs to them, with his finger on his lips; and begins, very*

softly, to pipe the Kinder-spell. The old CLAUS and URSULA in the windows seem to doze.

The children stop first, and look at him, fascinated; then they laugh, drowsily, and creep closer, — JAN always near. They crowd around him. He pipes louder, moving backwards, slowly, with magical gestures, towards the little by-streets and the closed doors. The doors open, everywhere.

Out come the children: little ones in night-gowns; bigger ones, with playthings, toy animals, dolls. He pipes, gayer and louder. They pour in, right and left. Motion and music fill the air. The PIPER lifts JAN to his shoulder (dropping the little crutch) and marches off, up the street at the rear, piping, in the midst of them all.

Last, out of the Minster come tumbling two little acolytes in red, and after them, PETER the Sacristan. He trips over them in his amazement and terror; and they are gone after the vanishing children before the church-people come out.

The old folks lean from their windows.]

OLD URSULA

The bell, the bell! the church bell! They're bewitched!

[Peter rushes to the bell-rope and pulls it. The bell sounds heavily. Reënter, from the church, the citizens by twos and threes and scores.]

OLD URSULA

I told ye all, — I told ye! — Devils' bargains!

[The bell.]

[KURT, JACOBUS, and the others appear.]

KURT

Peter the Sacristan! Give by the bell.
What means this clangor?

PETER *the Sacristan*

They're bewitched! bewitched!
[Still pulling and shouting.]

URSULA

They're gone!

KURT

Thy wits!

OLD CLAUS

They're gone — they're gone — they're gone!

PETER *the Sacristan*

The children!

URSULA

— With the Piper! They're bewitched!
I told ye so.

OLD CLAUS

— I saw it with these eyes!
He piped away the children.
[*Horror in the crowd. They bring out lanterns
and candles. VERONIKA holds up the for-
gotten crutch.*]

VERONIKA

Jan — my Jan!

KURT

[*to her*]

Thy boy! But mine, my three, all fair and
straight. —

AXEL'S WIFE

[furiously to him]

'T was thy false bargain, thine; who would not
pay

The Piper. — But we pay!

PETER *the Sacristan*

Bewitched, bewitched!

The boys ran out — and I ran after them,
And something red did trip me — 't was the
Devil,
The Devil!

OLD URSULA

Ah, ring on, and crack the bell:
Ye'll never have them back. — I told ye sō!

[The bell clangs incessantly.]

Curtain

ACT II

SCENE I: *Inside 'the Hollow Hill.'*

A great, dim-lighted, cavernous place, which shows signs of masonry. It is part cavern and part cellerage of a ruined, burned-down and forgotten old monastery in the hills. — The only entrance (at the centre rear), a ramshackle wooden door, closes against a flight of rocky steps. — Light comes from an opening in the roof, and from the right, where a faggot-fire glows under an iron pot. — The scene reaches (right and left) into dim corners, where sleeping children lie curled up together like kittens.

By the fire sits the PIPER, on a tree-stump seat, stitching at a bit of red leather. At his feet is a row of bright-colored small shoes, set two and two. He looks up now and then, to recount the children, and goes back to work, with quizzical despair.

Left, sits a group of three forlorn Strollers. One nurses a lame knee; one, evidently dumb,

talks in signs to the others; one is munching bread and cheese out of a wallet. All have the look of hunted and hungry men. They speak only in whispers to each other throughout the scene; but their hoarse laughter breaks out now and then over the bird-like ignorance of the children.

A shaft of sunlight steals through the hole in the roof. JAN, who lies nearest the PIPER, wakes up.

JAN

O H!

[The PIPER turns] ,

Oh, I thought . . . I had a dream!

PIPER

[softly]

Ahé?

JAN

I thought . . . I dreamed . . . somebody wanted me.

PIPER

Soho!

JAN

[earnestly]

I thought . . . Somebody Wanted me.

PIPER

How then?

[With watchful tenderness.]

JAN

I thought I heard Somebody crying.

PIPER

Pfui! — What a dream. — Don't make me cry again.

JAN

Oh, was it you? — Oh, yes!

PIPER

[apart, tensely]

No Michael yet!

[JAN begins to laugh softly, in a bewildered way; then grows quite happy and forgetful. While the other children waken, he reaches

*for the pipe and tries to blow upon it, to the
PIPER'S amusement. ILSE and HANSEL,
the Butcher's children, wake.]*

ILSE

Oh!

HANSEL

— Oh!

PIPER

Ahé?

ILSE

I thought I had a dream.

PIPER

Again?

ILSE

... It was some lady, calling me.

HANSEL

Yes, and a fat man called us to come quick;

A fat man, he was crying — about me!

That same fat man I dreamt of, yesterday.

PIPER

Come, did you ever see a fat man cry,
About a little Boy?

*[The Strollers are convulsed with hoarse
mirth.]*

HANSEL

No, — Never.

ILSE

Never!

Oh, what a funny dream!

PIPER

*[checking the Strollers, with a gesture of
warning towards the door]*

Strange sights of Hamelin through these little
windows.

Come here, you dreamer. Tell me what he
said.

HANSEL

He only said ‘Come home!’ But I did n’t
go.

I don’t know where . . . Oh, what a funny
dream!

ILSE

Mine was a bad dream! — *Mine* was a lovely
lady

And she was by the river, staring in.

PIPER

You were the little gold-fish, none could catch.
Oh, what a funny dream! . . .

[*Apart, anxiously*]

No Michael yet.

[*Aloud*]

Come, bread and broth! Here — not all, three
at a time;

'T is simpler. Here, you kittens. Eat awhile.

So there are tears in Hamelin; — warm, wet
tears;

And maybe, salt. Who knows?

RUDI

Oh, I was dreaming!

[*The PIPER takes JAN on his knee and feeds him, after ladling out a big bowl of broth from the kettle for the Children, and giving them bread.*]

PIPER

Oh, I was dreaming, too!

CHILDREN

Oh, tell it to us!

PIPER

I dreamed . . . a Stork . . . had nested in my
hat.

CHILDREN

Oh!

PIPER

And when I woke —

CHILDREN

You had —

PIPER

One hundred children!

CHILDREN

Oh, it came true! Oh, oh; it all came true!

THE STROLLERS

Ah, ho, ho, ho!

[The dumb one rises, stretches, and steals toward the entrance, stopping to slip a blind-patch over one eye. The PIPER goes to him with one stride, seizing him by the shoulder.]

PIPER

[to him, and the others, apart]

Look you. — No Michael yet! — And he is gone

Full three days now, — three days. If he be caught,

Why then, — the little ravens shall be fed!

[Groans from the three]

Enough that Cheat-the-Devil leaked out too; —
No foot but mine shall quit this fox-hole
now!

And you, — think praise for once, you have no
tongue,

And keep these magpies quiet. *[Turns away.]*

[To himself]

Ah, that girl.
The Burgomeister's Barbara! But for her,

And moon-struck Michael with his 'one more look'!

Where is he now? — And where are we?

[*Turning back to the Children*] So, so.

[*The Strollers huddle together, with looks of renewed anxiety and wretchedness. — Their laughter at the Children breaks out forlornly now and then. — The PIPER shepherds the Children, but with watchful eyes and ears toward the entrance always. — His action grows more and more tense.*]

RUDI

[*over his broth*]

Oh, I remember now! — Before I woke . . .

Oh, what an awful dream!

ILSE

Oh, tell us, Rudi, —

Oh, scare us, — Rudi, scare us! —

RUDI

[*bursting into tears*]

. . . Lump was dead!

Lump, Lump! —

[*The Children wail.*]

PIPER

[distracted]

Who's Lump? —

RUDI

Our Dog!

PIPER

[shocked and pained]

The Dog! — No, no.

Heaven save us — I forgot about the dogs!

RUDI

He Wanted me; — and I always was n't there!
And people tied him up, — and other people
Pretended that he bit. — He never bites!
He Wanted me, until it broke his heart,
And he was dead!

PIPER

[struggling with his emotion]

And then he went to heaven,
To chase the happy cats up all the trees; —
Little white cats! . . . He wears a golden
collar . . .

And sometimes — [*Aside*] — I'd forgot about
the dogs!

Well, dogs must suffer, so that men grow wise.

'T was ever so.

[*He turns to give JAN a piping lesson.*]

CHILDREN

Oh, what a funny dream!

[*Suddenly he lifts his hand. They listen, and hear a dim sound of distant chanting, going by on some neighboring road. The PIPER is puzzled; the Strollers are plainly depressed.*]

JAN

What is it?

PIPER

People; passing down below,
In the dark valley.

[*He looks at the Children fixedly*]

Do you want to see them?

CHILDREN

Don't let them find us! What an ugly noise. —
No, no — don't let them come!

PIPER

Hark ye to me.

Some day I'll take you out with me to play;
High in the sun, — close to the water-fall. . . .
And we will make believe — *We'll make believe*
We're hiding! . . .

[*The Strollers rock with mirth.*]

CHILDREN

Yes, yes! Oh, let us make believe!

STROLLERS

Oho, ho, ho! — A make-believe! — Ho, ho!

PIPER

But, if you're good, — yes, very, very soon
I'll take you, as I promised, —

CHILDREN

— Gypsies, oh!

PIPER

Yes, with the gypsies. We shall go at night,
With just a torch —

[*Watching them.*]

CHILDREN

Oh!

PIPER

Like fire-flies! Will-o'-the-wisps!
And make believe we're hiding, all the way,
Till we come out into a sunny land, —
All vines and sunlight, yes, and men that sing!
Far, far away — forever.

[Gives ILSE a bowl to feed the other children]

*[JAN pipes a measure of the Kinder-spell,
brokenly. The PIPER turns.]*

So! Thou'lt be
My master, some day. Thou shalt pipe for me.

JAN

[piping]

Oh, was n't that one beautiful? — Now you!

PIPER

[taking the pipe]

*The rainbow-bridge by day;
— And borrow a shepherd-crook!
At night we take to the Milky Way;
And then we follow the brook!*

*We'll follow the brook, whatever way
The brook shall sing, or the sun shall say,
Or the mothering wood-dove coos !
And what do I care, what else I wear,
If I keep my rainbow shoes !*
[*He points to the little row of bright shoes.
The Children scream with joy. ILSE and
HANSEL run back.*]

CHILDREN

Oh dear! What lovely shoes! Oh, which are
mine?
Oh! Oh! — What lovely shoes! Oh, which are
mine?

PIPER

Try, till you see.

[*Taking up a little red pair*]

But these, — these are for Jan.

[*JAN is perched on the tree-stump, shy and
silent with pleasure.*]

ILSE

Oh, those are best of all! And Jan —

PIPER

And Jan

Is not to trudge, like you. Jan is to wear
Beautiful shoes, and shoes made most of all,
To look at!

[Takes up a pair of bird's wings.]

CHILDREN

[squealing]

Oh! Where did you find the wings?
Bird's wings!

PIPER

There was some hunter in the woods,
Who killed more birds than he could carry
home.

He did not want these, — though the starling
did,

But could not use them more! And so, —

[Fastening one to each heel]

And so, —

They trim a little boy.

[Puts them on JAN. He is radiant. He stretches out his legs and pats the feathers.]

CHILDREN

[trying on theirs and capering]

O Jan! — O Jan!

Oh! see my shoes!

[The PIPER looks at JAN.]

PIPER

Hey day, what now?

JAN

I wish . . .

PIPER

What do you wish? Wish for it! — It shall come.

[JAN pulls him closer and speaks shyly.]

JAN

I wish — that I could shown them — to the
Man,

The Lonely Man.

*[The PIPER looks at him and backs away;
sits down helplessly and looks at him again.]*

Oh, can I? —

PIPER

Thou! — 'T would make me a proud man.

JAN

Oh! it would make Him smile!

[*The Children dance and caper. TRUDE wakes up and joins them. Sound of distant chanting again.*]

TRUDE

— I had a dream!

PIPER

A dream!

[*Pretending to be amazed. Reflects, a moment*]

I know! — Oh, what a funny dream!

[*The Children all fall a-laughing when he does. — Noise without. Cheat-the-Devil's voice crying, 'Cuckoo — Cuckoo !'*]

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Quick, quick! — I've something here.

[*The others roll away a big stone, and enter by the wooden door (rear), CHEAT-THE-*

DEVIL. *He does not wear his red hood.
He has a garland round his neck, and a
basket on his arm.]*

PIPER

[sharply to himself]

No Michael yet!

[To CHEAT-THE-DEVIL]

Michael! — Where's Michael?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Look you, — you must wait.
We must be cunning. — There's a squirrel,
mark you,
Hopped after me! He would have found us
out.

I wanted him; I loved him. But I ran.
For once a squirrel falls a-talking. — Ah!
Look what I have. — Guess, guess!

[Showing his basket to the Children.]

CHILDREN

Cakes!

[He is sad]

Shoes!

[*He is sadder*]

Then — honey!

[*He radiantly undoes his basket, and displays a honeycomb. The Strollers, too, rush upon him.*]

PIPER

Ah, Cheat-the-Devil! They would crop your ears.

Where had you this?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Why, such a kind old farmer!
He'd left his bee-hives; they were all alone;
And the bees know me. So I brought this for
you;
I knew They'd like it. — Oh, you're happy
now!

PIPER

But Michael, — have they caught him?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Oh, not they!
I heard no word of Michael; Michael's safe!

Once on the road I met a countryman,
Asked me the way. And not a word I spoke!
'T is far the wisest. Twenty riddles he asked
me.

I smiled and wagged my head. Anon cries he,
'This Fool is deaf and dumb!' — That made me
angry,

But still I spoke not. — And I would not hurt
him!

He was a bad man. But I liked the mule. —
Now am I safe! — Now am I home at last!

PIPER

'St. — Met you any people on the way,
Singing?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

No, growling, — growling dreary psalms
All on a sunny day! Behind the hedges,
I saw them go. They go from Hamelin, now;
And I know why! —

[*The PIPER beckons him away from the
Children.*]

The mayor's Barbara
Must go to Rudersheim, to be a Nun!

PIPER

To be a Nun!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

A penance for them all.

She weeps; but she must go! All they, you see,
Are wroth against him. — He must give *his*
child —

PIPER

A nun!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

[*nodding*]

Forever! — She, who smiled at Michael.
Look you, she weeps! They are bad people
all; —

Nothing like these. [*Looking at the Children.*]
These are all beautiful.

PIPER

To lock her up! A maiden, shut away
Out of the sun. To cage her there for life,
Cut off her hair; pretend that she is dead! —
Horrible, horrible! No, I'll not endure it.

I'll end this murder. — He shall give up his;
But never so! — Not so! — While I do live
To let things out of cages! — Tell me, quick! —
When shall it happen?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Why, it falls to-day.

I saw two herds of people going by,
To be there well aforetime, for the sight.
And she is going last of all, at noon;
All sparkling, like a Bride. — I heard them tell.

PIPER

No, never, never! — No, it shall not be!
Hist! —

[Steps heard scrambling down the entrance-way.]

[Enter MICHAEL in mad haste. They rush upon him with exultation and relief. He shakes them off, doggedly.]

PIPER

So! — You had like to have hanged us.

MICHAEL

— What of that?

PIPER

All for a lily maiden.

MICHAEL

Ah, — thy pipe!

How will it save her? — *Save her!* — Tune thy
pipe

To compass that! — You do not know —

PIPER

I know.

Tell me no more. — I say it shall not be!

To heel, lad! No, I follow, — none but I!

Go, — go! [MICHAEL *rushes out again.*][To CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, *pointing to the*
Children.]

Do you bide here and shepherd these.

CHILDREN

Where are you going? — Take us too! — us
too! —

Oh, take us with you? — Take us!

PIPER

[distracted]

No, no, no!

You shall be kittens all. And chase your tails,
Till I come back! — So here!

*[Catches HANSEL and affixes to his little
jacket a long strip of leather for a tail; then
whirls him about.]*

CHILDREN

Me too! — Me too!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Let me make tails, — let me!

[Seizing shears and leather.]

PIPER

[wildly]

Faith, and you shall.

A master tailor! — Come, here's food for
thought.

Think all, —

[To the Strollers]

And hold your tongues, there! —

If a Cat —

If a Cat have — as all men say — Nine Lives,
And if Nine Tailors go to make a Man,
How long, then, shall it take one Man turned
Tailor

To keep a Cat in Tails, until she die?

[CHEAT-THE-DEVIL looks subdued; the children whirl about.]

But here's no game for Jan. — Stay! Something
else. —

[He runs to a wooden coffer, rear, and takes
out a long crystal on the end of a string,
with a glance at the shaft of sunlight from
the roof. The Children watch.]

Be quiet, now. — Chase not your tails too far,
Till I come home again.

CHILDREN

Come home — come home!

PIPER

And you shall see my —

CHILDREN

Something Beautiful!

Oh, oh, what is it? — Oh, and will it play?

Will it play music?

PIPER

Yes.

[*He hangs the crystal in the sun. A Rainbow strikes the wall.*]

— The best of all!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, JAN, CHILDREN

Oh, oh, how beautiful, — how beautiful!

PIPER

And hear it pipe and call, and dance, and sing.

Héjà! — And hark you all. You have to mind —

The Rainbow!

[*He climbs out, pipe in hand. The Children whirl about after their tails. — CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, and JAN on his tree-stump, open-mouthed with happiness, watch the Rainbow.*]

Curtain

SCENE II: *The Cross-ways: on the Long Road to Rudersheim.*

A wooded country: high hills at back. The place is wild and overgrown, like the haunted spot it is reputed to be. In the foreground, right, a ruined stone well appears, in a mass of weeds and vines. Opposite, left, tall trees and dense thickets. Where the roads cross (to left of centre), stands a large, neglected shrine, with a weather-worn figure of Christ, — again the 'Lonely Man,' — facing toward Hamelin. — The stage is empty, at rise of the curtain; but the sound of chanting from burghers just gone by fades slowly, on the road to Rudersheim.

From the hillside at the rear comes the PIPER, wrapped in a long green cloak, his pipe in his hand. He looks after the procession, and back to Hamelin. — Enter, springing from the bushes to the right, MICHAEL, who seizes him. Their speech goes breathlessly.

MICHAEL

QUICK! — tell me —

PIPER

— Patience.

MICHAEL

Patience? — Death and hell!

Oh, save her — save her! Give the children
back.

PIPER

Never. Have you betrayed us?

MICHAEL

I! — betrayed?

PIPER

So, so, lad.

MICHAEL

But to save her —

PIPER

There's a way, —

Trust me! I save her, or we swing together
Merrily, in a row. — How did you see her?

MICHAEL

By stealth: two days ago, at evening,
Hard by the vine-hid wall of her own garden,

I made a warbling like a nightingale;
And she came out to hear.

PIPER

A serenade!

Under the halter!

MICHAEL

Hush. — A death-black night,
Until she came. — Oh, how to tell thee, lad!
She came, — she came, not for the nightingale,
But even dreaming that it would be I!

PIPER

She knew you? — We are trapped, then.

MICHAEL

No, not so!

She smiled on me. — Dost thou remember how
She smiled on me that day? Alas, poor maid,
She took me for some noble in disguise!
And all these days, — she told me, — she had
 dreamed
That I would come to save her!

PIPER

Said she this?

MICHAEL

All this — all this, and more! . . .
What could lies do? — I lied to her of thee;
I swore I knew not of thy vanishment,
Nor the lost children. But I told her true,
I was a stroller and an outcast man
That hid there, like a famished castaway,
For one more word, one look, without a hope.
Helpless to save her.

PIPER

And she told thee then,
She goes to be a nun?

MICHAEL

Youth to the grave!
And I — vile nothing — cannot go to save
her,
Only to look my last —

PIPER

Who knows?

MICHAEL

[*bitterly*]

Ah, thou! —

PIPER

Poor Nightingale!

[*Fingers his pipe, noiselessly.*]

MICHAEL

[*rapt with grief*]

Oh, but the scorn of her!

PIPER

She smiled on thee.

MICHAEL

Until she heard the truth: —

A juggler, — truly, — and no wandering knight!

Oh, and she wept.

[*Wildly*]

Let us all hang together.

PIPER

Thanks. Kindly spoken. — Not this afternoon!

MICHAEL

Thou knowest they are given up for dead?

PIPER

Truly.

MICHAEL

Bewitched?

PIPER

So are they.

MICHAEL

Sold to the Devil?

PIPER

*[Pacing softly up and down, with the restless
cunning of a squirrel at watch]*

Pfui! But who else? Of course. This same old
Devil!

This kind old Devil takes on him all we do!

Who else is such a refuge in this world?

Who could have burned the abbey in this place,
Where holy men did live? Why, 't was the
Devil!

And who did guard us one secluded spot
 By burying a wizard at this cross-ways? —
 So none dare search the haunted, evil place!
 The Devil for a landlord! — So say I!
 And all we poor, we strollers, for his tenants;
 We gypsies and we pipers in the world,
 And a few hermits and sword-swallowers,
 And all the cast-aways that Holy Church
 Must put in cages — cages — to the end!

[*To MICHAEL, who is overcome*]

Take heart! I swear, — by all the stars that
 chime!

I'll not have things in Cages!

MICHAEL

Barbara!

So young, — so young and beautiful!

PIPER

And fit

To marry with friend Michael!

MICHAEL

Do not mock.

PIPER

I mock not. — (Baa — Baa — Barbara!)

MICHAEL

Ay, she laughed,

On that first day. But still she gazed. — I saw
Her, all the while! I swallowed —

PIPER

Prodigies!

A thousand swallows, and no summer yet!
But now, — 't is late to ask, — why did you not
Swallow her father? — That had saved us all.

MICHAEL

They will be coming soon. They will cut off
All her bright hair, — and wall her in forever.

PIPER

Never. They shall not.

MICHAEL

[*dully*]

Will you give them back

Now?

PIPER

I will never give them back. Be sure.

MICHAEL

And she is made an offering for them all.
I heard it of the gossips. — They have sworn
Jacobus shall not keep his one ewe-lamb
While all the rest go childless.

PIPER

And I swear
That he shall give her up, — to none but thee!

MICHAEL

You cannot do it!

PIPER

Have I lived like Cain,
But to make good one hour of Life and Sun?
And have I got this Hamelin in my hands,
To make it pay its thousand cruelties
With such a fool's *one-more*? . . .

— You know right well,
'T was not the thousand guilders that I wanted

For thee, or me, or any! — Ten would serve.
But there it ached; *there*, in the money-bag
That serves the town of Hamelin for an heart!
That stab was mortal! And I thrust it deep.
Life, life, I wanted; safety, — sun and wind! —
And but to show them how that daily fear
They call their faith, is made of blasphemies
That would put out the Sun and Moon and
Stars,

Early, for some last judgment!

[He laughs up to the tree-tops]

And the Lord,
Where will He get His harpers and singing-men
And them that laugh for joy? — From Hamelin
guilds? —

Will you imagine Kurt the Councillor
Trying to sing?

[He looks at his pipe again; then listens intently.]

MICHAEL

His lean throat freeze! — But she —
Barbara! Barbara! —

PIPER

Patience. She will come,
Dressed like a bride.

MICHAEL

Ah, do not mock me so.

PIPER

I mock not.

MICHAEL

She will never look at me.

PIPER

Rather than be a nun, I swear she will
Look at thee twice, — and with a long, long look.

*[Chant approaches in the distance, coming
from Hamelin.]*

VOICES

*Dies irae, dies illa
Solvat saeculum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.*

*Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando iudex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!*

PIPER

Bah, how they whine! Why do they drag it so?

MICHAEL

[*overcome*]

Oh, can it be the last of all? O Saints! —
O blessed Francis, Ursula, Catherine!
Hubert — and Crispin — Pantaleone — Paul!
George o' the Dragon! — Michael the Arch-
angel!

PIPER

Michael Sword-eater, canst not swallow a chant?
The well, the well! — Take care.

VOICES

[*nearer*]

*Inter oves locum praesta,
Et ab hoedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.*

*Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis:
Voca me cum benedictis.*

[MICHAEL climbs down the ancient well,
reaching his head up warily, to see.
The PIPER waves to him debonairly, points

to the tree-tops, left, and stands a moment showing in his face his disapproval of the music. He fingers his pipe. As the hymn draws near, he scrambles among the bushes, left, and disappears.

Enter slowly, chanting, the company of burghers from Hamelin, — men together first, headed by priests; then the women. — ANSELM and all the townsfolk appear (saving VERONIKA, the wife of KURT); JACOBUS is meek; KURT very stern. — As they appear, the piping of the Dance-spell begins softly, high in air. The hymn wavers; when the first burghers reach the centre of the stage, it breaks down.

They look up, bewildered; then, with every sign of consternation, struggle, and vacant fear, they begin to dance, willy-nilly. Their faces work; they struggle to walk on; but it is useless. The music whirls them irresistibly into a rhythmic pace of $\frac{3}{4}$ time, and jogs their words, when they try to speak, into the same dance-measure. One by one, — two and two they go, — round and round like corks at first, with every sign of struggle and protest, then off, on the long road

to Rudersheim. Fat priests waltz together.
 — KURT the fierce and JACOBUS the sleek
 hug each other in frantic endeavor to be
 released. Their words jolt insanely.]

KURT, JACOBUS

{ No, no. — No, no. — No, no. — No, no!
 { Yes, yes. — I, yes. — Yes, yes. — Yes, yes!

SOME

{ *La — crymos — a — Dies — ill —*
 { Bewitched — the Devil! — bewitched — be-
 witched!
 { I will not — will not — will — I will!
 { No, no — but where! — Help — help! — To
 arms!

OTHERS

{ *Suppli — canti — suppli — Oh!*
 { To Hamelin — back — to Hamelin — stay!
 { No, no! — No, no, — Away, — away!

[*They dance out, convulsively, towards Rudersheim. KURT and JACOBUS, still whirling, cry.*]

JACOBUS, KURT

{ Yes, yes! — yes, yes! — Let go — let go —
 { No, no! — I will not — No! . . . No!

[*Exeunt, left, dancing.*]

OTHERS

{ Keep time, keep time! Have mercy! —
 Time!
 { Oh, let me — go! — Let go — let go!
 { Yes, yes — Yes, yes — No, no — no — no!

[BARBARA appears, pale and beautiful; — richly dressed in white, with flowing locks. She is wan and exhausted. — The dance-mania, as it seizes her, makes her circle slowly and dazedly with a certain pitiful silliness. The nuns and monks accompanying her point in horror. But they, too, dance off with each other, willy-nilly, — like leaves in a tempest. BARBARA is left alone, still circling slowly. The piping sounds softer. She staggers against a tree, and keeps on waving her hands and turning her head, vaguely, in time.]

MICHAEL looks forth from the well; then climbs out and approaches her.]

MICHAEL

She is so beautiful, — how dare I tell her?
My heart, how beautiful! The blessed
saint! . . .

Fear nothing, fairest Lady. — You are saved.
[*She looks at him unseeingly, and continues to
dance. — He holds out his arms to stop her.*]

Pray you, the danger's gone. Pray you, take
breath!

Poor, shining dove, — I would not hold thee
here,

Against thy wish. — 'T is Michael, the sword-
eater.

[*The piping ceases.*]

BARBARA

[*murmuring*]

Yes, yes — I must — I must — I must . . .

[*Reënter the PIPER from the thickets.*]

MICHAEL

Look, I will guard you like a princess, here;
Yes, like Our Lady's rose-vine.

BARBARA

[gasping]

Ah, my heart!

[*The PIPER comes towards her. She sees him and holds out her arms, crying:*]

Oh, he has saved me! — I am thine — thine — thine!

[*Falls into his arms half-fainting. The PIPER stands amazed, alarmed, chagrined.*]

PIPER

Mine?

MICHAEL

[furiously]

Thine? — So was it? All a trap? Cock's blood!

Thine, thine! — And thou hast piped her wits away.

Thine!

PIPER

[holding her off]

No, not mine!

BARBARA

[to him]

Why did you steal me hence?
When did you love me? — Was it on first sight?

PIPER

[confounded]

I, love thee?

MICHAEL

— *Knave ! thief ! liar !*

PIPER

— Give me breath.

[*Holds off BARBARA gently.*]

BARBARA

Where are you taking me?

PIPER

I? Taking thee?

MICHAEL

[to her]

He shall not steal thee!

BARBARA

[in a daze]

I must follow him.

PIPER

No! 'T is too much. You shall not follow me!
I'll not be followed. — Damsel, sit you down.
Here is too much! I love you not.

BARBARA

[wonderingly]

You do not?

Why did you pipe to me?

MICHAEL

— And steal her wits,
Stealer of all the children!

BARBARA

[vaguely]

Are they safe?

PIPER

[to MICHAEL]

Oh, your good faith! —

[To her]

They're safe.

BARBARA

I knew — I knew it!

PIPER

And so art thou. But never shall they go
To Hamelin more; and never shalt *thou* go
To be a nun.

BARBARA

To be a nun, — no, no! Ah me, I'm spent.
Sir, take me with you.

MICHAEL

[still enraged, to the PIPER]

Rid her of the spell!

Is this thy pledge?

PIPER

[distracted]

I do but rub my wits —
To think — to think.

[To himself]

What shall I do with her,
Now she is here? What if she stayed? — For-
ever?

[*To them*]

Hearken. — You, Michael, on to Rudersheim —

MICHAEL

And leave her here? No, no!

PIPER

Then take the girl.

BARBARA

To Rudersheim? No, never, never!

PIPER

Well . . .

Hearken. — There is the hermit, over the hill.

[*Apart, wildly*]

But how — suppose she will not marry him?

I will not take her where the children are.

And yet —

[*An idea strikes him. To her*]

Hark, now; — hark, now, and tell me truly:
Can you spin cloth?

BARBARA

[*amazed*]

I? Spin?

PIPER

[eagerly]

Can you make shoes?

BARBARA

I — *I* make shoes! — Fellow!

PIPER

So.

MICHAEL

Art thou mad!

PIPER

With me you may not go! But you'll be safe.
Hearken: — you, Michael, go to Rudersheim;
And tell the nuns —

BARBARA

No, no! I dare not have it!
Oh, they would send and take me! No, no, no!

PIPER

Would you go back to Hamelin?

BARBARA

No — no — no!

Ah, I am spent.

[Droops towards the PIPER; falters and sinks down on the bank beside the well, in a swoon. — The PIPER is abashed and rueful for the moment.]

MICHAEL

All this, your work!

PIPER

[looking at her closely]

Not mine.

This is no charm. It is all youth and grief,
And weariness. And she shall follow you. —
Tell the good nuns you found her sore bewitched,
Here in this haunt of 'devils'; — clean distraught.

No Church could so receive a dancing nun!
Tell them thou art an honest, piteous man
Desires to marry her.

MICHAEL

Marry the Moon!

PIPER

No, no, the Moon for me! — She shall be
yours;

And here she sleeps, until her wits be sound.

[He spreads his cloak over her, gently.]

The sun's still high. 'T is barely afternoon. —

*[Looks at the sunshine. A thought strikes
him with sudden dismay.]*

'T is — no, the time is going! — On my life,
I had forgot Them! — And They will not stay
After the Rainbow fades.

MICHAEL

[confounded]

Art thou moon-mad?

PIPER

[madly]

No. Stir not! Keep her safe! I come anon.

But first I go. — They'll not mind Cheat-the-
Devil!

They'll creep, to find out where the Rainbow
went.

I know them! So would I! — They'll all leak
out!

MICHAEL

Stay — stay!

PIPER

No; guard her, you! — Anon, anon!

MICHAEL

But you will pipe her up and after you!

PIPER

[flinging him the pipe from his belt]

Do you fear this? Then keep it till I come.

You bide! — The Other cannot.

MICHAEL

Who?

PIPER

*The Rainbow,**The Rainbow! —**[He runs madly up the hillside, and away.]**Curtain*

ACT III

SCENE: *The same, later. BARBARA lies motionless, still sleeping. — MICHAEL, sitting on the bank opposite, fingers the pipe with awe and wistfulness. He blows softly upon it; then looks at the girl hopefully. She does not stir. Enter the PIPER, from the hills at back. He carries a pair of water-jars slung over his shoulders, and seems to be in high feather.*

PIPER

[singing]

OUT of your cage,
Come out of your cage
And take your soul on a pilgrimage!

Pease in your shoes, an if you must! —

But out and away, before you're dust:

Scribe and Stay-at-home,

Saint and Sage,

Out of your cage,

Out of your cage! —

[He feigns to be terror-struck at sight of the pipe in Michael's hands.]

Ho, help! Good Michael, Michael, loose the charm!

Michael, have mercy! I'm bewitched! —

MICHAEL

[giving him the pipe]

Cock's faith!

Still mocking! — Well ye know, it will not play
Such games for me.

PIPER

Be soothed, — 't was as I guessed
[Unslings the jars]

All of them hungry, — and the Rainbow
going; —

And Cheat-the-Devil pining in a corner.

'T was well I went: they were for leaking out,
And then, — lopped ears for two!

MICHAEL

Oh, that will come.

PIPER

Never believe it! We have saved her, look you;

We save them all! No prison walls again,
For anything so young, in Hamelin there.
Wake her, and see.

MICHAEL

Ay, wake her. But for me,
Her sleep is gentler.

PIPER

[*comfortingly*]

Nay, but wait. — Good faith,
Wait. We have broke the bars of iron now;
Still there are golden! — 'T is her very self
Is caged within herself. Once coax her out,
Once set her own heart free! —

MICHAEL

Wake her, and see!
[*The PIPER crosses, humming.*]

PIPER

*Mind your eyes, tune your tongue!
Let it never be said, but sung, — sung;
'Out of your cage, out of your cage!'
Maiden, maiden, —*

[He wakes her gently. BARBARA sits up, plainly bewildered; then she sees the PIPER, and says happily:]

BARBARA

Oh! — you have come to save me. They are gone.

All this, for love of me!

PIPER

[ruefully]

No, no — I — No!

BARBARA

You — you are robbers?

[Her hands go to the pearls about her neck.]

PIPER

[indignant]

No! Blood on the Moon!

This is the maddest world I ever blinked at. — Fear nothing, maiden. I will tell you all.

Come, sit you down; and Michael shall keep watch

From yonder hillock, lest that any pass.

Fear nothing. None will pass: they are too
sure

The Devil hath this cross-ways! — Sit you
down.

[MICHAEL watches, with jealous wistfulness,
from the road (left rear). — BARBARA half
fearfully sits up, on the bank by the well.]

BARBARA

Not love? And yet . . . you do not want my
pearls?

Then why —

PIPER

For why should all be love or money?
Money! Oho, — that mouldy thousand guild-
ders

You think of! — But it was your Hamelin
friends

That loved the guilders, and not I.

BARBARA

Then why —

Why did you steal me hence?

PIPER

Why did yourself

Long to be stolen?

BARBARA

[*shuddering*]

Ah! to be shut up . . .

Forever, — young — alive!

PIPER

Alive and singing;

Young, — young; — and four thick walls and
no more sun,

No music, and no wandering, and no life!

Think you, I would not steal all things alive

Out of such doom? — How can I breathe and
laughWhile there are things in cages? — You are
free;

And you shall never more go back again.

BARBARA

And you, who are you then?

PIPER

How do *I* know?

Moths in the Moon! — Ask me a thing on
reason.

BARBARA

And 't was not . . . that you loved me.

PIPER

Loved thee? No! —

Save but along with squirrels, and bright fish,
And bubbling water.

BARBARA

Then where shall I go!

PIPER

Oh, little bird, — is that your only song?
Go? Everywhere! Here be no walls, no
hedges,
No tolls, no taxes, — rats nor aldermen!
Go, say you? Round the world, and round
again!

[*Apart*]

— Ah, she was Hamelin-born.

[*He watches her*]

But there's a man, —
Sky-true, sword-strong, and brave to look upon;
One that would thrust his hand in dragon's
mouth
For your bright sake; one that would face the
Devil,
Would swallow fire —

BARBARA

You would?

PIPER

[*desperately*]

I? — No, not I!
Michael, — yon goodman Michael.

BARBARA

[*bitterly*]

A stroller! — oh, nought but a wandering
man.

PIPER

Well, would you have a man take root, I ask?

BARBARA

That swallows swords. . . .

PIPER

Is he a comely man?

BARBARA

That swallows swords! —

PIPER

What's manlier to swallow?

Did he but swallow pancakes, were that praise?
Pancakes and sausage, like your Hamelin yokels?

He swallows fire and swords, I say, and more.
And yet this man hath for a whole noon-hour

Guarded you while you slept; — still as a dove,
Distant and kind as shadow; giant-strong
For his enchanted princess, — even you.

BARBARA

So you bewitched me, then.

PIPER

[wildly]

How do I know?

BARBARA

Where are the children?

PIPER

I'll not tell you that.

You are too much of Hamelin.

BARBARA

You bewitched them!

PIPER

Yes, so it seems. But how? — Upon my life,
'T is more than I know, — yes, a little more.

[*Rapidly: half in earnest and half in whimsy*]
Sometimes it works, and sometimes no. There
are

Some things upon my soul, I cannot do.

[*Watching her.*]

BARBARA
[*expectantly*]

Not even with thy pipe?

PIPER

Not even so.

Some are too hard. — Yet, yet, I love to try:
And most, to try with all the hidden charms
I have, that I have never counted through.

BARBARA
[*fascinated*]

Where are they?

PIPER
[*touching his heart*]

Here.

BARBARA

Where are they?

PIPER

How do I know?

If I knew all, why should I care to live?

No, no! The game is What-Will-Happen-
Next?

BARBARA

And what will happen?

PIPER

[*tantalizingly*]

Ah! how do I know?

It keeps me searching. 'T is so glad and sad
And strange to find out, What-Will-Happen-
Next!

And mark you this: the strangest miracle . . .

BARBARA

Yes! —

PIPER

Stranger than the Devil or the Judgment;
Stranger than piping, — even when *I* pipe!
Stranger than charming mice — or even men —

BARBARA

[*with tense expectancy*]

What is it? What?

PIPER

[watching her]

Why, — what may come to pass
Here in the heart. There is one very charm —

BARBARA

Oh!

PIPER

Are you brave?

BARBARA

[awe-struck]

Oh!

PIPER

[slowly]

Will you drink the philter?

BARBARA

'T is . . . some enchantment?

PIPER

[mysteriously]

'T is a love philter.

BARBARA

Oh, tell me first —

PIPER

Why, sooth, the only charm
In it, is Love. It is clear well-water.

BARBARA

[disappointed]

Only well-water?

PIPER

Love is only Love.
It must be philters, then?

*[He comes down smiling and beckons to
MICHAEL, who draws near, bewildered.]*

This lady thirsts

For magic!

*[He ties a long green scarf that he has over
his shoulder, to a water-jar, and lowers it
down the old well; while BARBARA watches,
awe-struck. He continues to sing softly.]*

*Mind your eyes,
Tune your tongue;*

*Let it never be said,
But sung, — sung! —*

• • • • •

MICHAEL

[to BARBARA, *timidly*]

I am glad at least, fair lady,
To think how my poor show did give you pleas-
ure
That day — that day when —

BARBARA

Ah! that day of doom!

MICHAEL

What is your will?

BARBARA

[*passionately*]

I know not; and I care not!

[*Apart*]

Oh, it is true. — And he a sword-eater!

[*The PIPER hauls up the jar, full of water.*]

PIPER

Michael, your cup.

[MICHAEL gives him a drinking-horn from his belt. The PIPER fills it with water, solemnly, and turns to BARBARA, who is at first defiant, then fascinated.]

Maiden, your ears. So: — hearken.
Before you drink of this, is it your will
Forever to be gone from Hamelin?

BARBARA

I must, — I must.

PIPER

Your mother?

BARBARA

[*piteously*]

I have no mother;
Nor any father, more. He gave me up.

PIPER

That did he! — For a round one thousand
guilders!

Weep not, I say! First, loose you, heart and
shoes,

From Hamelin. Put off now, the dust, the
mould,

The cobble-stones, the little prying windows;
The streets that dream o' *What the Neighbors*
Say.

Think you were never born there. Think some
Breath

Wakened you early — early on one morning,
Deep in a Garden (but you knew not whose),
Where voices of wild waters bubbling ran,
Shaking down music from glad mountain-
tops, —

Where the still peaks were burning in the dawn,
Like fiery snow, — down to the listening valleys,
That do off their blue mist only to show
Some deeper blue, some haunt of violets.

No voice you heard, nothing you felt or saw,
Save in your heart, the tumult of young birds,
A nestful of wet wings and morning-cries,
Throbbing for flight! . . .

Then, — for your Soul, new wakened, felt athirst,
You turned to where that call of water led,
Laughing for truth, — all truth and star-like
laughter!

Beautiful water, that will never stay,
But runs and laughs and sparkles in the heart,
And sends live laughter trickling everywhere,
And knows the thousand longings of the Earth!
And as you drank it then, so now, drink here;

[He reaches her the horn. She has listened, motionless, like a thing bewitched, her eyes fixed and wide, as if she were sleep-walking. She drinks. MICHAEL stands near, also motionless. When she speaks, it is in a younger voice, shy, sweet, and full of wonder.]

And tell me, — tell me, you, — what happened then?

What do you see?

BARBARA

Ah! —

[She looks before her with wide, new eyes.]

PIPER

Do you see — a —

BARBARA

... Michael!

PIPER

So! — And a good one. And you call him? —

BARBARA

... Michael.

PIPER

So. — 'T is a world of wonders, by my faith! —
What is the fairest thing you see but —

BARBARA

Michael.

PIPER

And is he comely as a man should be?
And strong? — And wears good promise in his
eyes,
And keeps it with his heart and with his hands?
[*She nods like a child*]
And would you fear to go with him? —

BARBARA

No, no!

PIPER

Then reach to him that little hand of yours.

[MICHAEL, *wonder-struck, runs to the jar, pours water upon his hand, rubs it off with haste, and falls on his knees before her, taking her hand fearfully.*]

BARBARA

[*timidly*]

And can he talk? —

PIPER

Yes, yes. — The maid's bewildered.
Fear nothing. Thou'rt so dumb, man! — Yes,
yes, yes.

Only he kneels; he cannot yet believe.
Speak roundly to him. — Will you go with him?
He will be gentler to you than a father:
He would be brothers five, and dearest friend,
And sweetheart, — ay, and knight and serving-
man!

BARBARA

Yes, yes, I know he will. And can he talk, too?

PIPER

Lady, you have bewitched him.

MICHAEL

Oh! dear Lady,
With you — with you, I dare not ope my
mouth
Saving to sing, or pray!

PIPER

Let it be singing!

Lad, 't is a wildered maiden, with no home
Save only thee; and she is more a child
Than yesterday.

MICHAEL

Oh, lordly, wondrous world! —
How is it, Sweet, you smile upon me now?

BARBARA

Sure I have ever smiled on thee. How not?
Art thou not Michael? — *And thou lovest me.*
And I love thee! — If I unloved thee ever,
It was some spell. —

[*Rapturously*]But this, — ah, *This is I!*

[MICHAEL, on his knees, winds his arms
about her.]

PIPER

[*softly*]

It is all true, — all true. Lad, do not doubt;
The golden cage is broken.

MICHAEL

Oh! more strange
Than morning dreams! I am like one new-born;
I am a speechless babe. — And this is she,
My Moon I cried for, — here, —

PIPER

It is thy bride.

MICHAEL

Thou wilt not fear to come with me?

BARBARA

With thee?
With thee! Ah, look! What have I more than
thee?
And thou art mine, tall fellow! How comes it
now
Right happily that I am pranked so fair!
[*She touches her fineries, her long pearl-
strings, joyously*]

And all this came so near to burying;
This!

MICHAEL

And this dearer gold.
[*Kissing her hair.*]

BARBARA

All, all for thee! —

[*She leans over in a playful rapture and
binds her hair about him*]

Look, — I will be thy garden that we lost,
Yea, everywhere, — in every wilderness.
There shall none fright us with a flaming
sword!

But I will be thy garden!

[*There is the sound of a herd-bell approach-
ing.*]

PIPER

See, — how the sunlight soon shall pour red
wine
To make your marriage-feast! — And do you
hear
That faery bell? — No fear! — 'T is some white
creature,

Seeking her whiter lamb. — Go; find our hermit;

And he shall bless you, — as a hermit can!

And be your pledge for shelter. There's the path. —

[To MICHAEL]

Follow each other, close!

MICHAEL

Beyond the Sun!

PIPER

A golden afternoon, — and all is well!

[He gives MICHAEL his cloak to wrap round BARBARA. They go, hand in hand, up into the hills. The herd-bell sounds softly. — The PIPER cocks his head like a squirrel, and listens with delight. He watches the two till they disappear; then comes down joyously.]

PIPER

If you can only catch them while they're young!

[The herd-bell sounds nearer. He lets down a water-jar into the well again. The

nearness of the bell startles him. He becomes watchful as a wild creature. It sounds nearer and nearer. A woman's voice calls like the wind: 'Jan! Jan!' —

The PIPER, tense and cautious, moves softly down into the shrubbery by the well.]

VERONIKA'S VOICE

Jan!

PIPER

Hist! Who dared?

VERONIKA'S VOICE

... Jan!.

PIPER

Who dared, I say?

A woman. — 'T is a woman!

[Enter VERONIKA, on the road from Hame-lin. She is very pale and worn, and drags herself along, clutching in her hand a herd-bell. She looks about her, holds up the bell and shakes it once softly, covering it with her fingers again; then she sits wearily down at the foot of the ruined

shrine, and covers her face, with a sharp breath.]

VERONIKA

. . . Ah, — ah, — ah!

[The PIPER watches with breathless wonder and fascination. It seems to horrify him.]

PIPER

[under breath]

That woman!

[VERONIKA lifts her head suddenly and sees the motion of the bushes.]

VERONIKA

He is coming! — He is here!

[She darts towards the well. — The PIPER springs up.]

Oh, God of Mercy! . . . It is only you!

Where is he? — Where? — Where are you hiding him?

PIPER

[confusedly]

Woman . . . what do you, wandering, with that bell?

That herd-bell?

VERONIKA

Oh! are you man or cloud? . . . Where is my
Jan?

Jan, — Jan, — the little lame one! He is mine.
He lives, I know he lives. I know — yes, yes.

[She crouches where she is, watching him.]

PIPER

Surely he lives!

VERONIKA

— *Lives!* will you swear it? Ah, —

I will believe! But he . . . is not so strong
As all the others.

PIPER

[apart]

Aië, how horrible!

[To her]

Sit you down here. You cannot go away
While you are yet so pale. Why are you thus?

[She looks at him distractedly.]

VERONIKA

You, who have torn the hearts out of our bodies

And left the city like a place of graves, —
Why am I spent? — Ah, ah! — But he's alive!

PIPER

[*fiercely*]

Alive? What else? — Why would he not be
living?

VERONIKA

I do not know.

PIPER

Do you take me for the Devil?

VERONIKA

I do not know.

PIPER

Yet you were not afraid?

VERONIKA

What is there now to fear?

PIPER

[*watching her*]

Where are the townsfolk?

VERONIKA

They are all gone to Rudersheim . . .

PIPER

[still watchful]

How so?

VERONIKA

Where, for a penance, Barbara, Jacob's daughter,

Will take the veil. His one, for all of ours!
It will be over now.

PIPER

Have none returned?

VERONIKA

I know not; I am searching, since the dawn.

PIPER

To-day?

VERONIKA

And every day.

PIPER

That herd-bell, there —
Why do you bring it?

VERONIKA

[sobbing]

Oh, he loves them so.
I knew, if he but heard it, he would follow,
An if he could. Only, the ways are rough —

PIPER

No more. I know!

VERONIKA

— And he had lost his crutch.

PIPER

[like a wounded animal]

Let be. You hurt me —

VERONIKA

You! — A man of air?

PIPER

I am no man of air.

VERONIKA

— What are you then?

Give them to me, I say. You have them hid,
Under a spell.

PIPER

[struggling with pity]

Yes.

VERONIKA

Give them back to me

PIPER

No.

VERONIKA

But they all . . . are living? On thy soul?

PIPER

— Wilt thou believe me?

VERONIKA

And you hold them safe?

PIPER

Safe.

VERONIKA

Shut away?

PIPER

From Hamelin; forever.

VERONIKA

And are they . . . warm?

PIPER

— Yes.

VERONIKA

Are they happy? — Oh,
That cannot be! — But do they laugh, some-
times?

PIPER

Yes.

VERONIKA

— Then you'll give them back again!

PIPER

No, never

VERONIKA

*[Half to herself, distraught between suspense
and hope.]*

I must be patient.

PIPER

Woman, they all are mine.

I hold them in my hands; they bide with me.
What's breath and blood, — what are the hearts
of children,
To Hamelin, — while it heaps its money-bags?

VERONIKA

You cared not for the money.

PIPER

No? — You seem

A foreign woman, — come from very far,
That you should know.

VERONIKA

I know. I was not born
There. But you wrong them. There were yet
a few

Who would have dealt with you more honestly
Than this Jacobus, or —

PIPER

Or Kurt the Syndic!

Believe it not. Those two be tongue and brain
For the whole town! I know them. And that
town

Stands as the will of other towns, a score,
That make us wandering poor the things we are!
It stands for all, unto the end of time,
That turns this bright world black and the Sun
cold,

With hate, and hoarding; — all-triumphant
Greed

That spreads above the roots of all despair,
And misery, and rotting of the soul!
Now shall they learn — if money-bags can
learn —

What turns the bright world black, and the Sun
cold;

And what's that creature that they call a child! —
And what this wingèd thing men name a heart,
Never to bind, never to bid be still;
And what this hunger and this thirst to sing,
To laugh, to fight, — to hope, to be *believed*?

And what is truth? And who did make the stars?

.

I have to pay for fifty thousand hates,
Greeds, cruelties; such barbarous tortured days
A tiger would disdain; — for all my kind!
Not my one mother, not my own of kin, —
All, all, who wear the motley in the heart
Or on the body: — for all caged glories
And trodden wings, and sorrows laughed to
scorn.

I, — I! — At last.

VERONIKA

Ah, me! How can I say:

Yet make them happier than they let you be?

PIPER

Woman, you could! — They know not how to be
Happy! They turn to darkness and to grief
All that is made for joy. They deal with men
As, far across the mountains, in the south,
Men trap a singing thrush, put out his eyes, —
And cage him up and bid him then to sing —
Sing before God that made him, — yes, to sing!

.

I *save* the children. — Yes, I save them, so,

Save them forever, who shall save the world! —
Yes, even Hamelin. —

But for only you,
What do they know of Children? — Pfui, *their*
own!

Who knows a treasure, when it is his own?
Do they not whine: '*Five mouths around the*
table;

And a poor harvest. And now comes one more!
God chastens us!' — Pfui! —

VERONIKA
[*apart, dully*]

... But I must be patient.

PIPER

You know, you know, that not one dared, save
you, —
Dared all alone, to search this devil's haunt.

VERONIKA
They would have died —

PIPER
But never risked their *souls!*
That knew I also.

VERONIKA

(Ah!

PIPER

‘Young faces,’ sooth,
The old ones prate of! — Bah, what is’t they
want?

‘Some one to work for me, when I am old;
Some one to follow me unto my grave;
Some one — for me!’ Yes, yes. There is not
one

Old huddler-by-the-fire would shift his seat
To a cold corner, if it might bring back
All of the Children in one shower of light!

VERONIKA

The old, ah, yes! But not —

PIPER

The younger men?
Aha! Their pride to keep the name alive;
The name, the name, the little Hamelin name,
Tied to the trade; — carved plain upon his
gravestone!

Wonderful! If your name must chain you, live,
To your gaol of a house, your trade you hate
— why then,
Best go without a name, like me! — How now?
Woman, — you suffer?

VERONIKA

Ah, yet could I laugh,
Piper, yet could I laugh, for one true word, —
But not of all men.

PIPER

Then of whom?

VERONIKA

Of Kurt.

PIPER

Bah, Kurt the Councillor! a man to curse.

VERONIKA

He is my husband.

PIPER

[*shortly*]

Thine? I knew it not.

Thine? But it cannot be. He could not father
That little Jan, — that little shipwrecked Star.

VERONIKA

Oh, then you love him? You will give him back?

PIPER

The son of Kurt?

VERONIKA

No, not *his* son! No, no.

He is all mine, all mine. Kurt's sons are straight,
And ruddy, like Kurt's wife of Hamelin there,
Who died before.

PIPER

And you were wed . . .

VERONIKA

So young,

It is all like some dream before the sunrise,
That left me but that little shipwrecked Star.

PIPER

Why did you marry Kurt the Councillor?

VERONIKA

[humbly]

He wanted me. Once I was beautiful.

PIPER

[wonderingly]

What, more than now?

VERONIKA

Mock if you will.

PIPER

I mock you!

O Woman, . . . you are very beautiful.

VERONIKA

I meant, with my poor self, to buy him house
And warmth, and softness for his little feet.
Oh, then I knew not, — when we sell our hearts,
We buy us nothing.

PIPER

Now you know.

VERONIKA

I know.

His dearest home it was, to keep my heart
Alone and beautiful, and clear and still;
And to keep all the gladness in my heart,
That bubbled from nowhere! — for him to
drink; —

And to be houseless of all other things,
Even as the Lonely Man.

[*The PIPER starts*]

Where is the child?

PIPER

No; that I will not tell. Only thus much:
I love thy child. Trust me, — I love them, all.
They are the brightest miracle I know.
Wherever I go, I search the eyes of men
To find such clearness; — and it is not there.
Lies, greed and cruelty, and dreadful dark!
And all that makes Him sad these thousand
years,
And keeps His forehead bleeding. — Ah, you
know!

VERONIKA

Whom do you think on?

PIPER

Why, the Lonely Man. —
But now I have the children safe with me;
And men shall never teach them what men
know; —

Those radiant things that have no wish at all
Save for what is all-beautiful! — the Rainbow,
The Running Water, and the Moon, the Moon!
The only things worth having!

VERONIKA

— Oh, you will not
Give him to me?

PIPER

How give you yours again,
And not the others? What a life for him!

[She hides her face]

And Kurt the Syndic, left without his sons?
Bah, do not dream of it! What would Kurt
do? —

And hearken here! Should any hunt me down,
Take care. Who then could bring the children
back?

VERONIKA

Jan! Jan!

PIPER

He loves me. He is happy.

VERONIKA

*[passionately]**No!*

Without me? — No.

PIPER

He has not even once
Called you.

VERONIKA

[staggering]

Ah, ah! . . .

The spell. —

PIPER

*[startled]*Nay, now; — rise up now, foreign woman.
Would you not have him cheered?

VERONIKA

— O far-off God!

PIPER

[offering her water]

Drink here. Take heart. O Woman, they must
stay!

'T is better so. No, no, I mock thee not.
Thou foldest all about me like the Dark
That holds the stars. I would I were thy child.

VERONIKA

But I will find him. I will find him —

PIPER

No,
It must not be! Their life is bound with mine.
If I be harmed, they perish. Keep that word.
Go, go!)

VERONIKA

[passionately]

My longing will bring back my Own.

PIPER

Ah, long not so.

VERONIKA

Yes, it will bring him back!
He breathes. And I will wish him home to me,
Till my heart break!

PIPER

Hearts never break in Hamelin.
Go, then; and teach those other ones to long;
Wake up those dead!

VERONIKA

Peace. I shall draw him home.

PIPER

Not till he cries for thee.

VERONIKA

Oh, that will be
Soon, — soon.

PIPER

[*gently*]

Remember, — if one word of thine
Set on the hounds to track me down and slay me,

They would be lost forever; they would die, —
They, who are in my keeping.

VERONIKA

Yea, I hear.

But he will come . . . oh, he will come to me,
Soon, — soon.

[She goes, haltingly, and disappears along the road to Hamelin. — The PIPER, alone, stands spell-bound, breathing hard, and looking after her. Then he turns his head and comes down, doggedly. Again he pauses. With a sudden sharp effort he turns, and crosses with passionate appeal to the shrine, his arm uplifted towards the carven Christ as if he warded off some accusation. His speech comes in a torrent.]

PIPER

I will not, no, I will not, **Lonely Man!**
I have them in my hand. **I** have them all —
All — all! And I have lived unto this day.
You understand . . .

[He waits as if for some reply]

You know what men they are.
And what have they to do with such as these?

Think of those old as death, in body and heart,
Hugging their wretched hoardings, in cold fear
Of moth and rust! — While these miraculous
ones,

Like golden creatures made of sunset-cloud,
Go out forever, — every day, fade by
With music and wild stars! — Ah, but You
know.

The hermit told me once, You loved them, too.
But I know more than he, how You must love
them:

Their laughter, and their bubbling, skylark
words

To cool Your heart. Oh, listen, Lonely Man! —
.

Oh, let me keep them! I will bring them to You,
Still nights, and breathless mornings; they shall
touch

Your hands and feet with all their swarming
hands,

Like showering petals warm on furrowed
ground, —

All sweetness! They will make Thee whole
again,

With love. Thou wilt look up and smile on us!
.

Why not? I know — the half — You will be saying.

You will be thinking of Your Mother. — Ah,
But she was different. She was not as they.
She was more like . . . this one, the wife of
Kurt!

Of Kurt! No, no; ask me not this, not this!
Here is some dawn of day for Hamelin, —
now!

'T is hearts of men You want. —
Not greed and carven tombs, not misers' candles;
No offerings, more, from men that feed on
men;

Eternal psalms and endless cruelties! . . .
Even from now, there may be hearts in Ham-
elin,

Once stabbed awake!

*[He pleads, defends, excuses passionately; be-
fore his will gives way, as the arrow flies
from the bow-string.]*

— I will not give them back!

And Jan, — for Jan, that little one, that dearest
To Thee and me, hark, — he is wonderful.
Ask it not of me. Thou dost know I cannot!

.
(Look, Lonely Man! You shall have all of us

To wander the world over, where You stand
 At all the crossways, and on lonely hills, —
 Outside the churches, where the lost ones
 go! —

And the wayfaring men, and thieves and wolves
 And lonely creatures, and the ones that sing!
 We will show all men what we hear and see;
 And we will make Thee lift Thy head, and
 smile.

.

No, no, I cannot give them all! No, no. —

Why wilt Thou ask it? — Let me keep but one.

No, no, I will not.

.

. *Have Thy way. — I will!*

Curtain

ACT IV

SCENE: *Hamelin market-place.*

It is early morning; so dark that only a bleak twilight glimmers in the square; the little streets are dim. Everywhere gloom and stillness. In the house of KURT, beside the Minster, there is one window-light behind a curtain in the second story. At the casements, down right and left, sit OLD CLAUS and OLD URSULA, wan and motionless as the dead.

The church-bell, which likewise seems to have aged, croaks softly, twice. PETER the Sacristan stands by the bell-rope.

OLD URSULA

NO, no. They'll never come. I told ye so.

They all are gone. There will be nothing young
To follow us to the grave.

OLD CLAUS

No, no, — not one!

[*The Minster-door opens, and out come certain of the townsfolk from early mass. They look unnaturally old and colorless. Their steps lag drearily. — HANS the Butcher and his wife; AXEL the Smith with his wife, and PETER the Cobbler, meet, on their way to the little street, left, and greet one another with painstaking, stricken kindness. They speak in broken voices.*]

HANS *the Butcher*

Well, well —

AXEL *the Smith*

God knows!

[*The bell sounds*]

HANS *the Butcher*

Neighbor, how fare your knees?

[*AXEL smooths his right leg and gives a jerk of pain. They all move stiffly.*]

AXEL *the Smith*

I'm a changed man.

HANS *the Butcher*

Peter the Sacristan,
Give by the bell! It tolls like — Oh, well, well!

AXEL *the Smith*

It does no good, it does no good at all.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Rather, I do believe it mads the demons;
And I have given much thought —

AXEL *the Smith*

Over thy shoes!

PETER *the Cobbler*

[*modestly*]

To demons.

AXEL'S WIFE

Let him chirp philosophy!
He had no children.

PETER *the Cobbler*

[*wagging his head solemnly*]

I'm an altered man.

Now were we not proceeding soberly,
Singing a godly hymn, and all in tune,
But yesterday, when we passed by —

HANS' WIFE

Don't say it!

Don't name the curseful place.

HANS *the Butcher*

— And my poor head,
It goes round yet; — around, around, around,
As I were new ashore from the high seas;
Still dancing — dancing —

AXEL *the Smith*

Neighbor, say no more.

HANS *the Butcher*

Even as ye heard, the farmer's yokel found me
Clasping a tree, and praying to stand still!

AXEL the Smith

Ay, ay, — but that is nought.

PETER the Cobbler

All nought beside.

HANS' WIFE

Better we had the rats and mice again,
Though they did eat us homeless, — if we
might

All starve together! — Oh, my Hans, my
Hans!

PETER the Cobbler

Hope not, good souls. Rest sure, they will not
come.

AXEL'S WIFE

Who will say that?

PETER the Cobbler

[*discreetly*]

Not I; but the Inscription.

[*He points to the Rathaus wall.*]

AXEL *the Smith*

Of our own making?

PETER *the Cobbler*

On the Rathaus wall!

At our own bidding it was made and graved: —
How, — on that day and down this very street,
He led them, — he, the Wonderfully-clothed,
The Strange Man, with his piping;

[*They cross themselves*]

And they went, —

And never came again

HANS' WIFE

But they may come!

PETER *the Cobbler*

[*pityingly*]

Marble is final, woman; — nay, poor soul!
When once a man be buried, and over him
The stone doth say *Hic Jacet*, or Here Lies,
When did that man get up? — There is the
stone.

They come no more, for piping or for prayer;
Until the trump of the Lord Gabriel.

And if they came, 't is not in Hamelin men
To alter any stone, so graven. — Marble
Is final. Marble has the last word, ever.

[Groans from the burghers.]

HANS *the Butcher*

O little Ilse! — Oh! and Lump — poor Lump!
More than a dog could bear! — More than a
dog —

*[They all break down. The Shoemaker con-
soles them.]*

PETER *the Cobbler*

Bear up, sweet neighbors. — We are all but
dust.

No mice, no children. — Hem! And now Ja-
cobus, —

His child, not even safe with Holy Church,
But lost and God knows where!

AXEL'S WIFE

Bewitched, — bewitched!

*[Hans and his wife, arm in arm, turn left,
towards their house, peering ahead.]*

HANS' WIFE

Kind saints! Me out and gone to early mass,
And all this mortal church-time, there's a
candle,
A candle burning in the casement there; —
Thou wasteful man!

HANS *the Butcher*

[*huskily*]

Come, come! Do not be chiding.
Suppose they came and could not see their
way.
Suppose — O wife! — I thought they'd love the
light!
I thought —

PETER *the Cobbler*

Ay, now! And there's another light
In Kurt the Syndic's house.

[*They turn and look up. Other burghers join
the group. All walk lamely and look the
picture of wretchedness.*]

AXEL'S WIFE

His wife, poor thing,

The priest is with her. Ay, for once, they say,
Kurt's bark is broken.

OLD URSULA

There will be nothing young
To follow us to the grave.

AXEL'S WIFE

They tell, she seems
Sore stricken since the day that she was lost,
Lost, searching on the mountain. Since that
time,
She will be saying nought. She stares and smiles.

HANS' WIFE

And reaches out her arms, — poor soul!

ALL

Poor soul!

[*Murmur in the distance. They do not
heed it.*]

AXEL the Smith

[*To the Butcher*]

That was no foolish thought of thine; yon
candle.

I do remember now as I look back,
They always loved the lights. My Rudi there
Would aye be meddling with my tinder-box.
And once I — Oh! —

[*Choking*]

AXEL'S WIFE

[*soothingly*]

Now, now! thou didst not hurt him!
'T was I! Oh, once — I shut him in the dark!

AXEL *the Smith*

Come home . . . and light the candles.

PETER *the Cobbler*

In the day-time!

AXEL'S WIFE

Oh, it is dark enough!

AXEL *the Smith*

Lord knows, who made
Both night and day, one of 'em needs to shine!
But nothing does! — Nothing is daylight now.
Come, wife, we'll light the candles.

[*Exit with his wife.*]

THE PIPER

PETER *the Cobbler*

He's a changed man.

PETER *the Sacristan*

God help us, what's to do?

[Tumult approaching. Shouts of 'Jacobus' and 'Barbara.']

Hark!

HANS' WIFE

Neighbors!

HANS *the Butcher*

Hark! Hark!

[AXEL and his wife reënter hastily; AXEL rushes toward the noise.]

AXEL'S WIFE

Oh, I hear something! Can it be —

PETER *the Cobbler*

They're shouting.

HANS *the Butcher*

My lambs, — my lambs!

[AXEL *reënters, crestfallen*]

AXEL *the Smith*

'T is naught — but Barbara!

His — his!

[*Shaking his fist at the house of Jacobus.*]

PETER *the Smith*

[*calling*]

Jacobus!

[*The others are stricken with disappointment.*]

HANS *the Butcher*

Wife, — 't is none of ours.

AXEL *the Smith*

Let him snore on! — The only man would
rather

Sleep late than meet his only child again!

PETER *the Cobbler*

[*deprecatingly*]

No man may parley with the gifts of Fortune!

[*Knocking on the door*]

Jacobus!

[*Enter, at the rear, with a straggling crowd, BARBARA and MICHAEL, both radiant and resolute. She wears the long green cloak over her bridal array.*]

JACOBUS *appears in his doorway, night-capped and fur-gowned, shrinking from the hostile crowd. The people murmur.*]

CROWD

{ Barbara! — She that was bewitched!
And who's the man? Is it the Piper? No!
No, no — some stranger. Barbara! Barbara's
home; —
He never gave her up! — Who is the man?

JACOBUS

My daughter! 'T is my daughter, — found —
restored!

Oh, heaven is with us!

ALL

[*sullenly*]

Ah!

JACOBUS

Child, where have you been?

ALL

Ay, where, Jacobus?

[*He is dismayed.*]

JACOBUS

Who is this man? — Come hither.

BARBARA

[*without approaching him, lifting her face clearly*]

Good-morning to you, father! We are wed.

Michael, — shall I go hither?

[*The townsfolk are amazed.*]

JACOBUS

She is mad!

She is quite mad, — my treasure.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Let her speak.

Maids sometimes marry, even in Hamelin.

ALL

{ Ay, tell us!
Who is he? Barbara?
Art thou mad? — How came ye hither?

JACOBUS

Who is he?

BARBARA

Michael.

PETER *the Cobbler*

'T is the Sword-Eater!

A friend o' the Piper's! — Hearken —

ALL

She's bewitched!

HANS' WIFE

This is the girl was vowed to Holy Church,
For us and for our children that are lost!

BARBARA

Ay, and did any have a mind to me,
When I was lost? Left dancing, and distraught?

ALL

We could not. We were spell-bound. Nay,
we could not.

JACOBUS

[*sagely, after the others*]

We could not.

BARBARA

So! — But there was one who could.
There was one man. And this is he.

[*Turning to MICHAEL*]

And I,

I am no more your Barbara, — I am his.
And I will go with him, over the world.
I come to say farewell.

JACOBUS

He hath bewitched her!

MICHAEL

Why did we ever come? Poor darling one,
Thy too-much duty hath us in a trap!

AXEL *the Smith*

No, no! — Fair play!

OTHERS

Don't let them go! We have them.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Hold what ye have. Be 't children, rats or mice!
[*Hubbub without, and shouts. Some of the burghers hasten out after this fresh excitement. JACOBUS is cowed. BARBARA and MICHAEL are startled. The shouts turn savage. The uproar grows. Shouts of 'Ay, there he is! We have him! We have him! Help — help! Hold fast! Ah! Piper! Piper! Piper!'*]

How now? What all! —

[*The crowd parts to admit the PIPER, haled hither with shouts and pelting, by MARTIN the Watch and other men, all breathless. His eyes burn.*]

MICHAEL

[*apart*]

Save us! — They have him.

MARTIN

[*gaspingly*]

Help!

Mark ye — I caught him! — Help, — and hold
him fast!

PIPER

I came here, — frog!

MARTIN

Ay, he were coming on;
And after him a squirrel, hopping close!

SECOND MAN

As no man ever saw a squirrel hop —
Near any man from Hamelin! And I looked —

MARTIN

And it was he; and all we rush upon him —
And take him!

PIPER

Loose thy claws, I tell thee! —

ALL

{ 'Ware!
Mercy!
Let him go!

[Their cries turn into an uproar of rage and desperation. They surge and fall back between fury and fear. HANS THE BUTCHER, broken with hope, cries, 'Loose him! Let him speak!' — The PIPER shakes himself free. — He sees BARBARA and MICHAEL for the first time and recoils with amazement. BARBARA steps towards him. — It is to be understood in the following pages, where the crowd speaks, that only a general consensus of meaning comes out of the uproar.]

BARBARA

Oh, let him go, — let be. His heart is clear,
As water from the well!

[The PIPER gazes at her, open-mouthed.]

ALI

{ She talks in her sleep!
The maid's bewitched!
Now, will ye hear?

AXEL'S WIFE

He piped and made thee dance!

PETER *the Cobbler*

'T was he bewitched us!

AXEL

He piped away our children and our lives!

OLD URSULA

I told ye so! — ay, ay!

OLD CLAUS

I told ye so!

BARBARA

He piped; — and all ye danced and fled away!

He piped; — and brought me back my wander-
ing wits,

And gave me safe unto my Love again, —

My Love I had forgotten. . . .

PIPER

So!

MICHAEL

[with conviction]

Truly said.

BARBARA

[proudly]

Michael.

JACOBUS

Who is he, pray?

BARBARA

My own true love.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Now, is that all his name?

BARBARA

It is enough.

JACOBUS

— She's mad. Shall these things be?

ALL

{ *The Children! The Children!*
Where are the Children?
Piper! Piper! Piper!

PIPER

[*sternly*]

Quiet you. And hear me.

I came to bring good tidings. In good faith,
Of mine own will, I came. — And like a thief
You haled me hither. —

[*They hang upon his words*]

... Your children — live.

ALL

{ Thank God! I knew, I knew!
We could not think them lost.
Bewitched! Oh, but they live! —
Piper! — O Piper!

PETER *the Cobbler*

They 're spell-bound. — mark me!

PIPER

Ay, they are, — spell-bound:
 Fast bound by all the hardness of your hearts;
Caged, — in the iron of your money-lust —

ALL

{ No, no, not all! Not I! Not mine, not mine!
 { No, no, — it is not true.

PIPER

Your blasphemies, — your cunning and your
 Fear.

ALL

{ No, no! — What can we do?
 { News, Piper, news!
 { — The Children!

PIPER

Now hear me. You did make Jacobus swear
 To give his child. — What recks it, how he lose
 her? —
 Either to Holy Church — *against her will!* —
 Or to this man, — so that he give her up!

He swore to you. And she hath pledged her
faith.

She is fast wed. — Jacobus shall not have her.
He breaks all bargains; and for such as he,
You suffer. — Will you bear it?

ALL

No, no, no!

PIPER

Then she who was “Proud Barbara” doth wed
Michael-the-Sword-Eater. — The pledge shall
stand.
Shall it?

ALL

{ It stands.
{ Ay, ay!

PIPER

Your word!

ALL

{ We swear. We answer for him.
{ So much for Jacobus!

AXEL the Smith

An' if yon fellow like an honest trade,
I'll take him! — I'll make swords!

[*Cheers. MICHAEL is happy.*]

ALL

Quick, quick! — Our children. — Piper! — Tell
us all!

PIPER

'T is well begun. — Now have I come to say:
There is one child I may bring back to
you, —
The first.

ALL

[*in an uproar*]

{ Mine — mine! Let it be mine!
Ours! — All of them! Now!
Mine — mine — mine! — mine!

PIPER

[*unmoved*]

— Oh, Hamelin to the end!

Which of you longed the most, and dared the
most?

Which of you —

*[He searches the crowd anxiously with his
eyes.]*

ALL

{ I! I! I!
We searched the hills!
We prayed four days!
We fasted twenty hours —
Mine! Mine!
Mine — mine — mine — mine!

PIPER

Not yet. — They all do live
Under a spell, — deep in a hollow hill.
They sleep, and wake; and lead a charmèd
life.

But first of all, — one child shall come again.

[He scans the crowd still]

Where is the wife — of Kurt, the Councillor?

ALL

[savagely]

No, mine, mine, mine!

MARTIN'S WIFE

What, that lame boy of hers?

PIPER

Where is the wife of Kurt?

PETER *the Cobbler and* OTHERS

— Veronika?

The foreign woman? She is lying ill:

Sore-stricken yonder —

[*Pointing to the house.*]

PIPER

[*gladly*]

Bid her come, look out!

[*The crowd moves confusedly towards KURT'S house. The PIPER too approaches, calling.*]

Ho, — ho, within there!

[*ANSELM, the priest, appears in the doorway with uplifted hand, commanding silence. He is pale and stern. At sight of his face the PIPER falters.*]

ANSELM

Silence here! — Good people,

What means this?

PIPER

I have tidings for — the wife
Of Kurt — the Councillor.

ANSELM

You are too late.

PIPER

Bid her — look out!

ANSELM

[solemnly]

Her soul is passing, now.
[*The PIPER falls back stricken and speechless. — The crowd, seeing him humanly overwhelmed, grows brave.*]

MARTIN'S WIFE

'T is he has done it!

HANS *the Butcher*

— Nay, it is God's will.

Poor soul!

PETER *the Sacristan*

[*fearfully*]

Don't anger him! 'T was Kurt the Syndic
With his bad bargain.

AXEL *the Smith*

Do not cross the Piper!

MARTIN

Nay, but he's spent. He's nought to fear. —

Look there.

Mark how he breathes! Upon him! Help,

help, ho! —

Thou piping knave!

OTHERS

Tie — chain him! — Kill him! — Kill him!

[*They surround him. He thrusts them off.*]

PETER *the Cobbler* and OTHERS

{ Bind him, but do not kill him! — Oh, be-
ware!
What is he saying? — Peace.

PIPER

[*brokenly*]

The wife of Kurt!

Off! what can you do? — Oh! I came, I came
Here, full of peace, and with a heart of love; —
To give — but now that one live Soul of all
Is gone! — No, no!

— *I say she shall not die!**She shall not!*

ANSELM

Hush! — She is in the hands of God.
She is at peace.

PIPER

No, never! Let me by!

[ANSELM *bars the threshold and steps out.*]

ANSELM

Thou froward fool! — Wouldst rend with tears
again
That shriven breath? And drag her back to
sorrow?
It is the will of God.

PIPER

— And I say No!

ANSELM

Who dare dispute —

PIPER

I dare!

ANSELM

With death? — With God?

PIPER

I know His will, for once! She shall not die.

She must come back, and live! — *Veronika!*

*[He calls up to the lighted window. The
people stand aghast: ANSELM bars the
threshold.]*

I come, I come! I bring your Own to you!

Listen, Veronika!

*[He feels for his pipe. It is gone. — His
face shows dismay, for a moment.]*

Where? — Where?

PEOPLE

{ He's lost the pipe. — He's hiding it! —
He cannot pipe them back! 't is gone — 't is
gone. —
No, 't is to save his life. It is for time.

PIPER

[to himself]

— 'T is but a voice. What matter? —

CROWD

{ Seize him —
{ Bind him!

PIPER

[to them]

Hush!

[*Passionately he stretches his arms towards
the window.*]

ANSELM

Peace, for this parting Soul!

PIPER

*[with fixed eyes]**It shall not go.**[To the Window]*

Veronika! — Ah, listen! — wife of Kurt.

He comes . . . he comes! Open thine eyes a moment!

Blow the faint fire within thy heart. He comes!

Thy longing brings him; — ay, and mine, —
and mine!

Heed not these grave-makers, Veronika.

Live, live, and laugh once more! — *Oh! do you
hear?*

Look, how you have to waken all these dead,
That walk about you! — Open their dim eyes;
Sing to them with your heart, Veronika,
As I am piping, far away, outside!

Waken them, — change them! Show them how
to long,

To reach their arms as you do, for the stars,
And fold them in. Stay but one moment, —
stay,

And thine own Child shall draw thee back again
Down here, to mother him, — mother us all!
*Oh, do you listen? — Do not try to answer. —
I hear! — I hear. . . .*

[*A faint sound of piping comes from the distance. — The PIPER is first watchful, then radiant. — The burghers are awe-struck, as it sounds nearer.*]

BARBARA

Listen! —

MICHAEL

His very tune.

[*The PIPER faces front with fixed, triumphant eyes above the crowd.*]

MARTIN'S WIFE

O Lord, have mercy! —

The Pipe is coming to him, through the air!

ALL

'T is coming to the Piper; — we are lost. —

The Pipe is coming, coming through the air!

[*The PIPER, with a sudden gesture, commands silence. He bounds away (centre), and disappears. The people, spell-bound with terror, murmur and pray.*]

ANSELM

Retro me, Sathanas!

[KURT the Syndic appears on the threshold behind ANSELM, whose arm he touches, whispering. — Their faces are wonder-struck with hope and awe.]

HANS the Butcher

[to the others, pointing]

'T is Kurt the Syndic.

AXEL the Smith

Then she lives! —

HANS' WIFE

Look there!

OTHERS

Look, look! The casement! . .

[The casement of the lighted window opens wide and slowly. — Reënter the PIPER with JAN in his arms. The little boy holds the Pipe, and smiles about with tranquil happiness. The PIPER, radiant with joy, lifts him high, looking toward VERONIKA'S

window. — The awe-struck people point to the open casement.

VERONIKA'S two white hands reach out; then she herself appears, pale, shining with ecstasy.]

JAN

'T is Mother !

[The PIPER lifts him still before the window, gazing up. Then he springs upon the bench (outside the lower window) and gives JAN into the arms of VERONIKA. — KURT and ANSELM bow their heads. A hush. — Then JAN looks down from the window-seat.]

PIPER

[to him, smiling wisely]

And all the others?

JAN

They were all asleep.

PIPER

I'll waken them!

[He takes his pipe. — An uproar of joy among the burghers.]

AXEL *the Smith*, HANS *the Butcher*, ALL

{ Bring lights, — bring lights!
Oh, Piper — Oh, my lambs!
The children! — The children!

[Some rush out madly; others go into their houses for lights; some are left on their knees, weeping for joy.

The PIPER sounds a few notes; then lifts his hand and listens, smiling. — Uproar in the distance. — A great barking of dogs; — shouts and cheers; then the high, sweet voices of the Children.

The piping is drowned in cries of joy. The sun comes out, still rosy, in a flood of light. The crowd rushes in. Fat burghers hug each other, and laugh and cry. They are all younger. Their faces bloom, as by a miracle.

The Children pour in. Some are carried, some run hand-in-hand. Everywhere women embrace their own. — KURT has his sons. — CHEAT-THE-DEVIL comes, with a daisy-chain around his neck, all smiles.

An uproar of light and faces.]

HANS *the Butcher*

The treasure for the Piper!

ALL

Ay, ay, Piper!

HANS *the Butcher*

The thousand guilders!

PIPER

Give them Michael there,
For all us three. I hate to carry things; —
Saving out one!

*[He waves his hand to JAN in the window.
— VERONIKA appears behind him, shining with new life. JAN leans out and points to the ground.]*

Héjà! What now? —

[Picking up one of JAN's winged shoes.]

HANS' WIFE

Look! Look! —

And wings upon it! Mercy, what a shoe. —
Don't give it back. — The child will fly away!

PIPER

No, no!

[Looking up at the window soothingly.]

He only wanted one to show —

JAN

To Mother! — See.

[Showing her his other foot, joyously.]

PIPER

[to him]

And this, — wilt leave it here?

Here — with —

JAN

The Lonely Man! Oh, make Him smile!

[The PIPER crosses to the Shrine, with the little shoe, and hangs it up there; then he turns towards the window, waving his hand.]

CHILDREN

Where are you going? . . .

[They run and cling.]

PIPER

Ah, the high-road now!

CHILDREN

Oh! why?

PIPER

I have to find somebody there.

Yes, now and every day, and everywhere

The wide world over. — So: good-night, good-
morning,

Good-by! There's so much piping left to do, —
I must be off, and pipe.

CHILDREN

Oh! why?

PIPER

I promised,

Look you! . . .

CHILDREN

Who is it?

PIPER

Why, — the Lonely Man.

*[He waves them farewell, and goes. The
Children dance and laugh and sparkle.
Through the hundred sounds of joy, there
comes a far-off piping.]*

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

A Comedy in Three Acts

(Published in 1913)

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE WOLF

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

BROTHER LEO

BROTHER JUNIPER

His companions

NICOLO, the Inn-keeper

LUCIA, his daughter

THE BAKER

THE POTTER

THE FURRIER

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

THE DYER

THE DYER'S WIFE

OLD LUCREZIA

BIMBO

BIMBA

Children

LOUIS, the King of France

GRILLO

VECCHIO VECCHIO

People of Gubbio

Two Thieves

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

A POOR MAN, Giuseppe

A POOR WOMAN, Assunta

And A BABY

}

From Foligno

THREE DRYADS

Other folk of Gubbio.

TIME : THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS, 700 YEARS AGO

PLACE : ITALY ; IN AND NEAR GUBBIO

The action falls within the space of twelve hours.

Act I. — Morning : The woods on the mountain

Act II. — Noon : Gubbio

Act III. — Night : Gubbio

The Little Poor Man walked the world.
(Laugh, laugh, my scars!)
Hunger and thirst, and lack, and loss,
Beckoned to him as stars.

* * *



The Wolf of Gubbio

ACT I

SCENE: *A deep pine-wood on the mountain. The scene is framed right and left with two towering pine-boles like pillars, front, that reach out of sight without show of green. At the back, a bridle-path crosses; and the clearing, centre, shows a glimpse of the valley far below, with a sweep of silver-bright winter sky. The ground is strewn with coppery pine-needles and dead leaves; a few patches of snow. The dense pines tower out of sight, copper and dun, and laced with greenish light, but few boughs low enough to see. Down, towards the centre, to the left of the spectator, a gray rock, half-covered with pine-needles, shelters the opening of a low cave. Out of the bleak refrain of the wind comes the voice of THE WOLF, big and sorrowful.*

VOICE OF THE WOLF



THE World is cold; the World is cold.

The snows are round us, fold on fold.

Only the flocks are stalled within;

The kine are gathered, kith and kin.

. . . I must be growing old.

[The voice dies away with a moan]

[A PINE-DRYAD leans down swayingly from behind the trees in the foreground to the right. A second does likewise, left. Their auburn hair is long and straight; their hanging drapery is filmy green. They beckon each other, and listen, with finger on lip.]

VOICE OF THE WOLF

Their breath goes up, from stall and pen,

Close beside the homes of men

Gathered together, down below;

Homes of the men of Gubbio.

I have seen their breath float up together,

Warm and white, white as a feather,—

All together, against the cold.

. . . I must be growing old.

FIRST DRYAD

Who is it? — Did you hear?

SECOND DRYAD

. . . Did you?

VOICE OF A WOOD-DOVE

[*bubblingly*]

Who? . . . Who?

VOICE OF THE WOLF

This old unhappy heart
Does nought to keep me warm.
Dreams come, to vex me in a swarm.
I can but crouch and nurse the smart;
I can but ail, and lie apart,
And hide, from storm to storm.
Watching the little lights below;
Lights, for the men of Gubbio!
The world is very old.

— And I am cold.

[*The VINE-DRYAD appears over the edge of the cliff at back, reaching her way with long arms, from a tree-top just visible. She has dark hair in tendrils; and a garment of green and violet. She listens like the others.*]

450 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

SECOND DRYAD

Hush, can it be?

FIRST DRYAD

. . . Ah, listen, do!

WOOD-DOVE

Who? . . . Who?

VINE-DRYAD

Good-morning, Beautiful! — And happy meeting.

FIRST DRYAD

— Ehi, greeting!

SECOND DRYAD

— Greeting!

VINE-DRYAD

We're listening.

SECOND DRYAD

So am I!

But who?

FIRST DRYAD

And why?

None of you tiptoe Vines could ever guess. —
Some one is pining of his loneliness!

PINE-DRYADS

[*laughing*]

The Wolf — the Wolf it is, — old hulking
surly —

VINE-DRYAD

Only the Wolf? that woke us all so early?

[*Shivering*]

Oimè! — O Tramontana, change your tune; —

Let it be June!

[*Joining the others*]

SECOND DRYAD

Hush! We may bring him out, with all this
patter.

VINE-DRYAD

Not we, indeed! And if we did, what mat-
ter?

He has no ears for chatter!

FIRST DRYAD

Nor many teeth, by this, for punishment : —
Dull wits, and duller scent.

VINE-DRYAD

There's something in his heart, though, did
you hear?

WOOD-DOVE

. . . Fear . . . Fear!

FIRST DRYAD

[looking up in the trees]

Squirrel, what is it?

Do you find out. Run in, run in and visit!

*[There are heard and seen little scurryings
in the dead leaves.]*

SECOND DRYAD

Not he! Not he! He knows what he's about.
— Wolf with a secret!

VINE-DRYAD

— Ah, his heavy heart;

No wonder! He must stay with it, you know,
Sulking apart;

[A doglike groan from THE WOLF]

Only his black heart keeping him awake.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 453

FIRST DRYAD

For old times' sake !

VINE-DRYAD

If I look in to comfort him? — Would you?

WOOD-DOVE

Do . . . Do!

SECOND DRYAD

Comfort the Wolf? — Ah, hark! —

That sharpens his old fangs along my bark? —

A Wolf that only dreams of bite and
sup? —

That lives to eat things up!

If I were not a tree,

What hope for me?

You wildest Vine, you runaway romancer!

Creep in and bring an answer!

VINE-DRYAD

Hey, rabbit, rabbit, rabbit! Pretty fellow, —

Fratello, fratello! . . .

[She catches up a hare from his ambush]

454 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

Nestle and fret? And nestle? Ah, don't worry!
I'll let you go — no need of all this flurry.

Be off, then, — hurry, hurry!

*[Running and laughing, she throws him softly
off, left.]*

— And I, with you!

SECOND DRYAD

Wait, wait! Perhaps he'll tell.

VINE-DRYAD

[going blithely]

. . . Farewell!

Only a morning dream.

SECOND DRYAD

. . . A morning lost!

FIRST DRYAD

My eyes are dim with frost!

*[THE WOLF moans, full diapason. They stop
and listen, all.]*

SECOND DRYAD

Hush — hush —

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 455

FIRST DRYAD

Hush!

VOICE OF THE WOLF

The world is cold,
The world is dark.
Alone I wait ; alone I hark.
And hear my own heart grieve :
My sorrow, that no eyes behold ;
My longing, longing, sevenfold,
That no one would believe, —
No one would believe.

.

FIRST DRYAD

Sorrow? Believe!

VINE-DRYAD

Believe? Not I! [Going.

.

Good-bye!

SECOND DRYAD

Good-bye! . . . Believe? Ahai, who could!

456 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

FIRST DRYAD

[ascending to her tree]

Hush! Footsteps . . . yonder in the wood.
What if he hear?

SECOND DRYAD

He never could:—
He's wrapped about with woes!

FIRST DRYAD

[gleefully]

All, all alone!—Misunderstood,—
Ailing!

SECOND DRYAD

—Or deaf. Who knows?

FIRST DRYAD

. Or fallen in a doze.

[They withdraw into their trees and disappear]

[A bell sounds softly, far down in Gubbio.

THE WOLF appears at the door of his cave,
yawning.

THE WOLF

W-wuff!

[He lifts his nose high in the air]

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 457

Not for fire; and not for war.

What do they sound the great bell for?

Warm, . . . softly, it calls below,

Calling the men of Gubbio.

[The bell sounds dimly]

I . . . that was master of all the Pack

To ail, and sulk here, — and look back!

I, that could rend, and claw, and grip, —

Sucking my paws, for fellowship!

Puzzling here in my ambushade,

What men are, when they 're not afraid!

Worrying, — wondering, how 't would feel

To sit with men, and to share their meal;

Talking words, with my bite and sup

Out of a man-made, earthen cup . . .

[The bell sounds again]

Talking words, when the north wind blows,

Round the fire, . . . with nose to nose.

[complacently]

I was a tempest and a woe,

Unto the men of Gubbio . . .

Only one thing men do full well; —

How did they make . . . the bell?

[A running is heard through the dry leaves]

. . . W-ufff . . .

[THE WOLF *withdraws his head into the cave*]

458 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

[*Enter right, two children, BIMBO and BIMBA, breathless. They run stumblingly close by THE WOLF'S cave, in manifest terror and out of their way.*]

BIMBA

— Stop, stop! I have no breath.

PINE-DRYADS

[*softly from above*]

. . . Away away.

[*The children look up at trees, but see nothing. BIMBO takes out his pocket-knife, scared and at bay. They huddle together, panting out their words.*]

BIMBA

What was that? —

BIMBO

Wind, wind, — Tramontana! — Come, run, run!

BIMBA

[*sobbingly*]

I can't run any more. I can't run any more.
No, no! not if I saw the Wolf himself . . .

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 459

I could n't run any more! [*A slight contemptuous sniff is heard from the cave.*] Oh, what was that?

BIMBO

[*with chattering teeth*]

. . . Tramontana! — Ssh! — They 'll find us.

BIMBA

Oh! oh! — And she called us to find the baby . . . she begged us to find the baby. I don't dare. I don't dare!

BIMBO

We did n't see any baby. How could we find any baby? What's that? — [*A cone falls.*

BIMBA

[*looking up at the tree with a tear-stained smile*]

Tramontana blew us something down, out of the pine-tree!

BIMBO

Come on, come on! . . . We 'll catch it at home too. Spilling all the firewood. . . . Oh! [*Stops.*] They're coming. They're after us!

BIMBA

Get under the leaves. — Get under the leaves!
And if he comes near, we'll make-believe we're
rabbits. — Get under the leaves!

*[They burrow head-first under the leaves.
Enter up right, on the path, BROTHER
JUNIPER, a simple peasant Friar Minor, —
with a look of constant anxiety illumined
by beaming good will. He leads a donkey
laden with faggots; and he is followed by
BROTHER LEO, slim and young. BROTHER
JUNIPER turns towards the rustling leaves.
The burrowing children are wild with
terror.]*

BIMBA

[in a little high voice as he approaches]

Oh, please . . . I'm only a rabbit . . .
Oh, Messer Robber. . . . It is n't anything
but a fox, a . . . a little fox . . . a *little, little*
fox!

JUNIPER

[calling back to LEO as he approaches]

Fra Leo, Fra Leo, — come here, for love of
Our Lady! I have found a heap of leaves that

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 461

is bewitched; and calling out, — how it is now a fox, and now a rabbit, . . . and now, it is [BIMBA *crawls out gladly*] a child, — a very child, a woman-child, — as I am Brother Juniper, the silly plaything of the blessed saints!

LEO

[*sweetly to her*]

Give thee peace, little child. Was this the sorrowing we heard? [BIMBO *crawls out*.

JUNIPER

Another! And is it a rabbit enchanted you are, or a boy bewitched, in God's name? And whence was the crying?

BIMBA

O Brother Juniper, take us home, come with us — quick, quick! We thought you were Men.

BIMBO

Robbers!

JUNIPER *and* LEO

— Robbers? —

[*Pointing back.*

BIMBA

We came all the way from Gubbio —

BIMBO

Gathering wood. Blessed Francis was coming to Gubbio.

BIMBA

— This day! to make the Christmas feast for us. — And we went farther and farther. And we heard a crying —

BIMBO

— And there was a woman —

BIMBA

— Striving with a man — and calling out to us to find the Baby.

BIMBO

We did n't see any baby. . . .

BIMBA

— And we did n't dare. And she called to us . . . how it was under a juniper-tree.

BIMBO

—No, an olive-tree.

BIMBA

—No, a juniper-tree. But we durst n't—
. . . we were frightened. . . . We ran . . .

[*Shivering.*

[LEO *unbinds his hood and puts it on the
little girl.*

BIMBO

Of course we ran! And we must run home
now. There's the way. [*Pointing left.*

LEO

Alas, poor woman! 'T was her crying, then.

BIMBA

Oh, please to take us home!

LEO

Yea, little doves, that will we.

JUNIPER

Even to Gubbio we are all bent this day, to
make ready the birthday feast for Our Lord's

poor, and the blessed little father Francis is coming fast the way of Monte Subasio.

CHILDREN

[*dancing*]

Little Poor Man, — Little Poor Man!

BIMBA

Is he coming truly? — All this long way in the cold?—

LEO

Yea, little dove, his heart will warm the wind.

BIMBO

[*excitedly gazing at the donkey*]

Eh! Nicolo never lent you Pantaleone! . . .

BIMBA

No, it's the bishop's ass! The bishop's ass! He sent it for blessed Francis!

LEO

But blessed Francis goes afoot, all through the world. Moreover, this being the Holy Eve, it ought, as he says, to be a time of gladness for

THE WOLF OF GUBBIG 465

Brother Ass, — with all God's poor, — and with all God's creatures on two legs, or three or four!

JUNIPER

[*beating his breast suddenly*]

Mea culpa, what a rogue am I! . . . [*He hastens to the ass and untackles the fire-wood.*] That set but now this burden on my brother! Who should go freely, honorably, . . . even leaping as it were with holy exultation. . . (Light down, light down, Brother Wood!) — Yet this once, [*cooingly to the ass*] think it no burden, but a kindness, brother, to take this little one upon you, a child as it were, and for sake of the Holy Child!

[*Takes the wood upon his back, FRA LEO helping. They beckon the children.*]

LEO

Yea, let us find the poor soul that fell among thieves.

[*Turning right*]

BIMBO

No, this way, this way!

JUNIPER

— And her babe that she left in jeopardy as it were. . . . This winter day ! . . . and the wind . . . And the wolves . . .

BIMBO *and* BIMBA

Wolves !

LEO

Which way said she ?

[The children look at each other guiltily, then point off, left.

JUNIPER

[gladly]

The homeward way ?— Come, we will search as we go !

[The Brothers lift BIMBA on the ass, and they all go out, left, on the bridle-path to Gubbio.

THE WOLF *reappears at the door of his cave and sniffs tentatively in the direction pointed out by the children.*

THE WOLF

Hmph !

Wanted to tell . . . but did n't dare.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 467

The little whelps!—No baby there.

[Yawns and shuffles back in his cave: lies down with his nose out, bored'y.]

The world goes by,
The world goes by;
Forgotten in my lair I lie.
No, not forgotten; — down below,
I am a name in Gubbio;
I am a dread; though here apart
I nurse the thorn that's in my heart,
Watching the snows that melt, and drip;
Licking my paws, for fellowship!
Wondering what if a man came by,
To stand, to face me, eye for an eye;
Knifeless, fearless—?

. What would he do?
Ah,—such a man must be. But who?

[He yawns prodigiously; starts up and gives a low growl; lies down, disappointed, nose on his paws. His subsiding grunts speak boredom and disgust.]

Bah! The sound . . . of the smell that
grieves:—
Hope, betrayed by a cynic nose!
Just when an old heart half believes . . .

468 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

Same old, mouldy odor . . . of thieves!
— May as well doze.

[*Enter up, cautiously, VECCHIO VECCHIO, a tattered but unctuous optimist, and GRILLO, lean and bitter, with a cloak in his hands.*

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Come along, Snail!

GRILLO

Go along, Ox. — Do you look to go shares on my takings, Lie-Abed-Late? Look at me; he had the muscle of a copper-smith, that fellow. I have got a contortion of the spleen, pitching him over the cliff!

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Gathering cones, were they? Sooth, they'll be gathering up the bones of him, white as coral, next spring, when the snow in the gorge is melted. — Come, what catch, my limber little fisherman?

[*Grasping his arm*]

GRILLO

Softly, Bishop!—And a man of his size, groaning and cursing about his wife and the ‘Baby, baby, baby!’ . . . As if I were out child-napping.

[*They come down to the rock over THE WOLF, and cut along the lining of the cloak together.*]

VECCHIO VECCHIO

And the wife, while I searched her, screaming to the fowls of the air to save the ‘Baby, baby — baby!’—And all the while, no man required the baby . . . only this poor pittance, or saving,—or inheritance . . . Where is it, Sheepshead? sneeze out, I say!

GRILLO

[*with a wry face, unfolding a few coins and a small packet*]

Here was a witless woman. With all her struggle and cawing to get away, yielding up her husband to be thrown off the mountain—and her babe mislaid under a tree she will never find again,—she clings to the cloak; and we cling too. [*With disgust.*] Her all-in-all, — her

470 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

treasury! . . . A little bread, less cheese . . . and an image of a woman and a baby.

[*He hastily crosses himself on second thought*]

VECCHIO VECCHIO

No matter; this snack will stay us. [*Sniffing at it.*] *Peccorino!* The fourth time this week. Bah, — when we have but the coat of that nobleman of France we look to entertain — [*looking off left with concentrated purpose*] that nobleman of France who keeps us waiting, — we shall dine.

GRILLO

Per Bacco! 'Tis a rare snail. If he go another way?

VECCHIO VECCHIO

There is no other way, for a bridle-path!

[*They scramble upon THE WOLF'S rock, and eat their cheese, watching the path alertly. VECCHIO VECCHIO lifts up the cloak, sniggeringly, and puts it round his shoulders.*]

Take off thine evil eye from my rich garment!
'Twas folly to waste us on these small fry, these

creatures of Poverty, . . . hee — hee! — The world's failures. — Consider the man; — what a man! Base victim of his own unthrift. Puts all his coin in his wife's hood and loses it; ho — ho! And the woman, lean victim of her own unthrift! Why did she not lay up her hoardings in store of flocks or geese? Sews it all in her cloak for a journey. — Wastrel, to journey at all! Improvident from birth! With a young babe, forsooth; flaunting the swaddled creature to all the winds! — Mislays it under a juniper-tree, — hee — hee! A birthday gift for the Wolf of Gubbio!

[THE WOLF'S head appears suddenly, at the opening of his cave. The thieves, sitting above him vis-à-vis, do not perceive it. He sniffs long and earnestly from up centre, to the right as they talk, and listens with a growing interest evident in his red tongue and side-glances.

Go to; were it not for the chance of its wauling, I would seek out that babe, and bring it up in the fear of folly! Ho — ho! How long must we suffer by this swarm of babes? How is the noble world shamed by this spawning, this seething, this weltering of ill-conditioned babes, like

... cheese-mites; children of fools;— pale victims of their own unthrift! But all's well, or I am no philosopher. All's well:— I had it of a learned man I met . . on the road to Padua.

GRILLO

[*with intense bitterness*]

All's well? — All's rotten: look at me!

VECCHIO VECCHIO

[*waving him aside*]

The woman finds her way back; the better for her.— Or, she finds it not; the better for her kindred.— The man is free to carve his pathway in the world.— [*Flourishing his knife over the cheese.*]

GRILLO

[*with his mouth full*]

—If he live to find it.

VECCHIO VECCHIO^{*}

[*his eyes rolled up, piously*]

Freed of his Lawful Encumbrance.— And what more notable goad to valor and industry than the goad of Poverty?— As the lord bishop

was telling you at Foligno, while you fished for his purse —

GRILLO

(Ugh! — my rotten luck.)

VECCHIO VECCHIO

‘The goad of Poverty, scourging the slothful and pricking on the poor.’

GRILLO

[*with venom*]

Poverty? . . . Old Cheese, look at *me*, I tell you, look at me!

VECCHIO VECCHIO

I look, I look, and I repeat. Wastrels all, scatterlings, — locusts! Fie upon thee to devour thy cheese. Put by, put by, for a rainy day, — while I eat mine, of a chilly! Go to, thou ravening locust! Mark you this (I had it of a doctor I met . . on the road to Bologna): — Nothing will keep you idlers at home, save the fear of the Wolf at the door. Now am I a scholar or —

[THE WOLF *scents something, and snaps his jaws suddenly.*

GRILLO

Hist! What was that?

[*He rises and turns towards the bridle-path.*

THE WOLF *listens to their talk with growing animation.*

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Thou mettlesome thoroughbred!—Peace, peace. Benedicite! Reques-s-scat! . . . To continue:—the babe is lost; one less in a crowded world.

GRILLO

Nay, go on, Bishop. Thou hast left the babe with the Wolf of Gubbio. . . . Hee—hee—hee! The Wolf will keep him warm

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Thou hast a ribald fancy and a darkened mind. What wolf, finding a babe in the forest of a winter eve, would swallow it down, without a wash of wine? So to misprize it? Never! Nay, devour an orphan babe? He would fetch the creature home, to show him *gratitude*; for why else does a man fetch anything home?—

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 475

[*unctuously*] but for something to love him; to be the prop of his declining years!

GRILLO

—Clothe it with skins! Teach it Wolf's Latin—

VECCHIO VECCHIO

And bring it up godly,—to be a brown friar, absolve him of his sins, and sing masses for his departing soul!

[THE WOLF, *with a last decisive sniff high in air, darts out noiselessly, right.*

BOTH

What was that? Hist!

GRILLO

'T was a scantling in the leaves . . .

VECCHIO VECCHIO

A rabbit? . . . [*Looking up.*] The day's grown milder. [*Listening.*

GRILLO

Nay, it's there now. [*Pointing left.*] What if he be not alone? . . . My rotten luck!

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Chut!—What's a man or two? You heard him say it with his own mouth, in the courtyard at Foligno,—as we lay behind the wall, . . . he would go without escort? And his men-at-arms were to fall away?—*Ib, ib!* An he keep us waiting longer . . .

[They go up, to look down the bridle-path, and steal to the right on tiptoe, lost to sight for the moment.]

Reënter down, right, THE WOLF in haste, with a bundle like a swaddled Babe in his teeth. He stops, somewhat at a loss,—puts it down among the pine-needles, centre, and goes up on the trail of the two thieves, to reconnoitre.

THE PINE-DRYADS unfold from their trees, and lean down, right and left, their long arms almost touching as they droop over the Baby with curiosity and cherishing delight; then watchful looks towards THE WOLF. Appears on the edge of the cliff again, THE VINE-DRYAD, reassuring them with a gesture of mirth and wonder, pointing to THE WOLF, who is watching the thieves in their covert.

THE WOLF

[turning]

Wuff—

[*He wags his tail as he looks at the Baby, and then up, right. THE DRYADS withdraw slowly into the trees. THE WOLF runs down,—noses the Babe gently, gets it into his teeth again bundle-wise, and creeps into his cave.*

He is seen guardant, his head out, but withdrawn as the two thieves reappear, looking back for their prey. A soft sound comes from the cave.

GRILLO

[startled]

Hist!—

As I'm a lean sinner, I could swear I heard a sound, as it were of a babe,—a swaddled babe!

VECCHIO VECCHIO

[recovering himself]

A swaddled babe! Thou heardest a sound as of a swaddled babe, with auburn locks, lying under a tree that was planted the year of the death of King Pepin!

GRILLO

What was it? — If it be the babe, — we've missed our way; we've rounded on ourselves. We left the woman — [*Pointing back, right.*

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Peace, dolt! Thou heardst a rabbit calling thee grandmother.

GRILLO

— If it be the babe, we are lost through its wauling!

VECCHIO VECCHIO

If it be a babe, and if we lag, and if it waul, and if we be lost, — we be lost through thy Iff-ings and What-ings, — thou beardless son of an earth-worm. [*Both listen, right.*

— Here he comes, Silver-Trappings! here he comes, with his miniver edgings. Quick — to work!

[They run with sudden stealth, to conceal themselves behind the trees up right and left, with knives drawn.

Hoof-beats are heard, of horses walked gently

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 479

on the mountain-path ; a jingling of trap-pings.

The watchers, with faces turned suddenly to deadly rage and disappointment, steal farther down front to concealment, looking back.

GRILLO

Death of my life ! Six men-at-arms.

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Blast him, — blast him, the flea of fortune!
Who and what is he ?

[The knights are seen to ride along behind the pine-trees at back. In the centre, up, LOUIS OF FRANCE reins his horse and leans from the saddle with boyish eagerness. He is a young and comely man, clothed with knightly rickness, but bare-headed.

LOUIS

Look, there lies Gubbio ! When we shall come
To yonder bridge, I go afoot. *[To one.]* . . . René,
Have by the pilgrim robes that I must wear ;
 [To the others]
And when we pass the wall, — no sign from
you.

Think of that holy man I go to meet,
 The blessed Francis ! . . . and of heaven's high
 King, —

[They bare their heads]

How lowly to this world he came alone,
 A naked Babe. Think ye, within your minds,
 As we ride on. For we be pilgrims all
 Together, on this Birthday of my Lord,
 To keep His feast with holy Poverty. —
 Yea, and to pray, as men that be in need,
 The Little Poor Man for some blessedness,
 The Little Poor Man whom we go to seek !
 And when I shall dismount, then do you all
 Follow me, at a distance. . Stay me not,
 Whatever thing it pleasure me to do.
 Ride on, Sirs.

[The riders pass out left on the path to Gubbio]

GRILLO

Would you not take him for a vagrom preaching friar? Curled lap-dog ! He journeys like the king of France home from the crusades ! ' Ride on, Sirs ! ' And a pious dog would I be too, if preaching could line my coat with vair and my belly with partridge pies ! ' Follow me at a distance, gentlemen ! '

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Pish ! If they follow him at a distance as he said,
— we shall have the coat, and the vair, with the
partridge pies to follow ! And a ‘ little poor man,
a little poor man,’ he longed to meet? — *Ik, ik,* —
so do not I ! — Hold thy tongue ; and hurry
thy heels. For we ’ll follow him on, to Gubbio.

GRILLO

— *Pilgrims all, to Gubbio !*

VECCHIO VECCHIO

And mark the inn that he lies at. — Follow
you ‘ at a distance,’ pretty Sir ! Follow you at a
distance !

[*They start after, with venomous looks,*

GRILLO *first, who stops and waves back*

VECCHIO VECCHIO, *cautioning.*

A man’s voice is heard singing off, right ;

O Brother Sun . . .

All-folding Sight !

[THE WOLF, *at the door of his cave, starts*
up, with sudden eagerness.

GRILLO

What fool is this ?

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Some wandering simpleton . . . calling to all
the winds to come and pluck him. — Pluck him
we will ; he 'll never cry out ! — I 'm cold.

[They stand ready. The singing comes nearer]

*[THE WOLF trembles with excitement and
creeps out, watching also.]*

THE VOICE OF FRANCIS

O Brother Sun !
All-folding Sight,
Lo, where I sing along the dust !
Even a little one,
Yea, a wayside thing
Sunlight makes to sing, as he must !
All we are minstrels of thy King :
Maker of thy might,
Pouring from above : —
O Light of Light,
O Love of Love !

[Enter ST. FRANCIS, shining with gladness.]

*The thieves run to seize him. — THE
WOLF utters a furious snarl.*

*They loose ST. FRANCIS, and turn to see
THE WOLF crouching, ready to spring.*

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 483

VECCHIO VECCHIO *and* GRILLO

[*mad with fear*]

The Wolf of Gubbio! — The Wolf of Gubbio!
[*They rush out, left*]

[ST. FRANCIS *stretches out his arms in greeting*]

FRANCIS

. . . Welcome, Brother Wolf!

[THE WOLF *still crouching looks at him.*
A moment of silence.]

THE WOLF

Brother . . . you called me?

FRANCIS

Even so.

THE WOLF

And Wolf? —

FRANCIS

Yea, . . . truly.

THE WOLF

Then you know.

Why are you not dismayed? . . .

FRANCIS

At thee?

*[He spreads his arms wide, with a gesture
of sweet mirth.*

Why art not thou . . . afraid of me?

THE WOLF

[with nose abased]

You have heard them . . . Now you know
All. — You heard them say my name.

Sooth, it had a bitter fame,

Long ago.

I am . . . the Wolf of Gubbio.

There is no more to say.

FRANCIS

Thou he?

Long, — long have I looked for thee.

THE WOLF

Fair Sir, have pity on my shame.

FRANCIS

Shame? — Then you shall tell it me.

Nay, you shall not be afraid.

What am I for?— Your *Poverello*
 Out of Assisi, a low little fellow !
 These ears of mine were only made
 To hear things sorrowful and sore.

Come, you shall tell me more.
 [*He comes down.* THE WOLF *stays between*
 FRANCIS *and the opening to the lair.*

THE WOLF

Wolf I am, from last to first.
 Ah, but ‘ Wolf ’ is not the worst.
 . . . No, I am accurst.

FRANCIS

[*with childlike delight*]

Hearken here ; and then believe.
 Dost thou know, this Holy Eve,
 How the mouth of Brother Ox,
 And the ass, — and all the flocks, —
 Speak His praise, with one accord,
 Who is made our Lord?
 Lord of thee and me, and all ;
 Kings that sit within the hall, —
 Lambs that bleat within the fold ;
 Yea, and men and wolves that call
 In the cold !

Brother, of thy courtesy,
 Lay thy burden here on me;
 Give me leave to ease thy smart;
 Shew me all thy heart.

[*He lifts one of THE WOLF's paws in his hands*]

THE WOLF

Oh, what is it? What is waking
 Here in my old hide?
 Sir, my strength is breaking . . .
 With my pride.
 Is it the noon-day, maybe? — No,
 It must be music, ails me so.
 It's in my ears. — It warps my gait.
 I . . . can't walk straight.

FRANCIS

Tell me thy burden.

THE WOLF

[*shamedly*]

 If I can.

I long . . . I long to be a Man.

And here am I, a Wolf, behold!

The world's the world. —

. And it is cold.
And I am old.

FRANCIS

Brother, I know.

THE WOLF

[trying to recover his self-possession]

Well, you would hear.—I told you so!

I never thought, when life began,

That one could wish to be a Man.

But—one by one, the Pack died out;—

And nothing much to think about,

Grinding your teeth on one idea;

And little passing here . . .

And sometimes we can hear it well,—

When the wind's right . . . that Bell.

.

So; I have told you. Yet, in spite

Of dreaming on, night after night,—

I've always found, the frosty days

Brought back my wolfish ways. . . .

Sometimes a sheep,—even a cow,

Made me forget,—and break my vow.

Sometimes . . . *[Breaks off.]* Wff . .

Not that I want for bite and sup!

[Proudly]

I . . . could n't keep it up.

Then after all, up here again,
Alone and moping in my den . . .

*[He steals a guilty look towards it, and
searches the face of ST. FRANCIS for knowl-
edge; then turns his back on his den reso-
lutely and goes on.]*

I longed to be with Men;
To be a Man, as others are:—
No, no,—I don't mean similar.
I've never seen nor yet heard tell
Much good of men,—but, well,
Maybe some glamour of romance,
For all this—circumstance; . . .

[Looking round at his tail]
. . . I'd simply like the chance!

FRANCIS

Ah, Brother mine, a Wolf thou wert
To spread dismay!
Was it not to their mischief and their hurt
To come thy way?

THE WOLF

[meditating]

Yea.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 489

FRANCIS

Thy cruelties were more than men could say —

THE WOLF

. Yea.

FRANCIS

To make of thee, thyself, this castaway.

THE WOLF

[*acquiescent*]

. Hm-hm.

FRANCIS

Ah, dear my Brother, for this cause
Thy hands keep on their savage claws;
And splendor of thy furry hide
Keeps hot thy heart of wolfish pride.
Yea, but thine own heart after all

Hath made thee thrall:
Keeps thee in pain, bites in on thee
With the sharp tooth of misery.

THE WOLF

Thou sayest all.

FRANCIS

Yea, Brother, have I understood?

THE WOLF

I was longing . . . to be good.

FRANCIS

[*blithely*]

Longing lights the lovely fire ;
 Longing brings thee still no nigher
 To thy heart's desire.
 Work, and work ; and thou shalt know.
 Come !

THE WOLF

. . . But where?

FRANCIS

To Gubbio !

[*THE WOLF starts up ; then crouches again
 and steals a furtive look at his rock con-
 sidering whether he shall tell.*

[*Buoyantly*]

Where thy plunders stripped thee first ;
 Where thy teeth have done their worst.

THE WOLF

Oh, I am accurst, — accurst.

FRANCIS

Is there a burden left thee, say ?

THE WOLF

[evading the query]

Let me be with thee, for one day !

.
Ask no more . . . Ah, if you knew,
Would you not hate me? — even you !

FRANCIS

Hate thee, — I ? Ah, Brother, see !

And do thou cry out on me ;

A wolf, — a low and little one !

Regard the evil I have done : —

*[He points earnestly to a scrap of fox-skin
sewn upon the breast of his habit, and goes
on with pleading eagerness, while THE
WOLF sniffs up and down the patch.]*

This bit of fox-fur, — sniff ! — behold !

And more, and larger, sewn within,

To warm my sorry little skin

Against the winter cold ! . . .

When Brother Fox was found undone,

I, like a very heathen Hun,

Suffered a portion of his fur
 To make my bones the happier !
 Yea, of my self-love, so I did ;
 And this I wear, as thou wilt guess
 To show all men my wolfishness,
 And not to keep it hid !

[THE WOLF *struggles with his conscience ;
 and encourages himself with his tail.*

FRANCIS

To Gubbio, come !

[*A sound of running water begins to be
 heard ; sunlight steals through the tree-
 trunks and warms the sky to gold.*

THE WOLF

They hate me.

FRANCIS

Wilt thou earn
 A man's own peace ? Then work, and learn !
 Back to the world ; and there make good
 All thou hast dreamed of brotherhood.
 Hope and lose and hope again,
 And remember, and forget,

With us all ; for men are men,
But not brothers ; — no, not yet.

THE WOLF

Not brothers yet ? Then what 's the game ?
Surely Men were all the same
 . . . Till you came.

FRANCIS

In this twilight of thy wood ! —

THE WOLF

I was longing . . . to be good.
 [Looking back at his den]

FRANCIS

[joyously]

Work, with each of thy four paws.
Mind thee what thy teeth and claws
Tore from all these village-folk ; —
Homes that trembled ; hearts that broke.
Work, for those thou hast beguiled ; —
Left without or chick or child !
 [THE WOLF flattens himself suddenly]

494 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE WOLF

But they hate me. . . .

FRANCIS

Even so,

Come again to Gubbio.

THE WOLF

How can any gladness be?

FRANCIS

Thou shalt see.

THE WOLF

Can you think, and still say Go?

FRANCIS

[*smilingly*]

Nay, but Come ; — and come with me !

THE WOLF

[*rising giddily*]

Why . . . is the snow . . . melting along the
furrows?

Is it spring?

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 495

Why . . . do the hares . . . look out from
their hutches and burrows?

Listening?

FRANCIS

Love in the world it is, that makes all these

Awake and warm: —

Love walking in the world, that all the trees

Forget the storm.

THE WOLF

Why are the vines astir that were forsaken?

Can it be spring?

Why is the brook awake? — I heard it waken.

FRANCIS

And it will sing!

[*seeing THE WOLF balt*]

Is there something left behind?

Rankling thorn? — Or prick of mind? —

Shall we two believe each other?

THE WOLF

[*leaping about him with dog-like gaiety*]

Give the word. I will obey!

FRANCIS

Come with me. — Here lies the way,
 Wolf, my Brother !

[He goes radiantly up to the bridle-path and looks down at Gubbio. THE DRYADS lean from the trees softly: they point towards THE WOLF'S den with accusing looks.]

THE WOLF, *avoiding their eyes, drags his tail and walks heavily after the Saint, stopping for a last bangdog glance at the cave where the Baby lies hidden. As FRANCIS turns, he waves his tail, and prances after, with every sign of high spirits.*

THE WOLF

[looking back]

Wf! But shall I? — Would he? . . . No!

FRANCIS

[turning]

Pilgrims all, — to Gubbio!

[They go out together on the path to Gubbio; a sudden troop of wild doves after, like a flurry of snow.]

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 497

The scene fills with the sound of running water and new-wakening trees. The bird-voices grow to a chorus.

BIRDS

San Francesco!

San Francesco!

— D'Assisi!

— D'Assisi!

— D'Assisi!

Curtain

ACT II

SCENE: *A market-place in Gubbio: bright afternoon. Right and left, uniform and opposite each other, are stone arcades shading the little house-fronts, with humble wares hanging out, and a few caged blackbirds and pigeons.*

Down, left, nearest the spectators, is THE FURRIER'S; next, THE DYER'S. Down, right, THE POTTER'S booth and his wheel; then OLD LUCREZIA'S doorway. Front, left and right, their walls turn the corners, and show withered leaves hanging on the grape-vines, and weeds in the stone crevices of the walled by-way. In the wall to the left, there is a tiny alcove-shrine high up, with a dim terra-cotta relief of the Virgin and Child.

At the back, a wide arch crosses the scene,—running into a buttressed wall with a fountain, right. Left, it joins a flight of uneven stone steps, that lead, after the manner of Italian hill-towns, to an upper street; of which there is visible only a glimpse of

blue sky, — NICOLO'S inn-door, left, and a buttress of the Duomo, right. The archway makes a viaduct over the market-place.

Under the archway is a glimpse of the road, sprinkled with sun and shade; and to the left, directly beneath it, a stable-door.

At rise of the curtain, the people are busied in their doorways (with the exception of NICOLO the inn-keeper); LUCIA and other girls are filling their copper water-jars at the fountain by the archway.

BROTHER JUNIPER comes down the steps from the upper square, gently leading ASSUNTA, — a worn, Madonna-like young peasant, poorly clad, spent with grief and exhaustion.

JUNIPER

TAKE heart, poor soul, take heart! . . .

And even as Our Lady came to her refuge this day, riding lowly upon an ass, — take comfort and be gently led, so. . . even by me who am less than an ass, — Brother Juniper, a fool among the brothers.

[The people hasten towards him with eager greetings, and stand still on recognizing ASSUNTA.

500 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE PEOPLE OF GUBBIO

— Brother Juniper, Brother Juniper !

— Are you here at last ?

— Where 's the holy Francis ?

— And who is this ?

[ASSUNTA takes her hands from her eyes and looks through them, not at them, stark with grief.]

THE DYER'S WIFE

The woman of Foligno, back again ! — What ever befell you ?

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

— With your eyes as great as an owl's by daytime, —

LUCIA

— And your man, where's he ? And the babe ?

JUNIPER

Ah, her man, — her babe ! [*Warning them, with a gesture of pity.*] A sorry tale this, sweet brothers . . . And no song for her to sing you. Look you, the poor soul is sore spent

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 501

and out of measure full of woe; and beyond that, oppressed, with singular great sorrow.

[A clatter of hoofs, and the donkey appears under the archway, led by BROTHER LEO, who carries the firewood on his back, while BIMBA and BIMBO ride upon the donkey. The women go to meet them.]

THE DYER'S WIFE

Holy Mother! What do I see? The children riding home on the lord bishop's ass that he sent for holy Francis!—Oh where have you been? Where have you been? And I that had forgotten you all the morning, and what you were sent to fetch!—Light down, light down off the lord bishop's ass,—the two little wasps that you are!

LEO

Have patience, lady.

BIMBO and BIMBA

—We lost the faggots!

—We heard a thief.—

—We met a robber!

WOMEN

A thief,—a robber!

BIMBA

We heard a loud crying; so we ran —

BIMBO

But we turned to look —

BIMBA *and* BIMBO

[*pointing to ASSUNTA*]

And it was she —

BIMBA

— And an ugly man after her. So we ran away and hid from the noise. And darling Brother Juniper came by and found us; and Brother Leo —

[*ASSUNTA sits down on the edge of the fountain and shuts her eyes, leaning against the stone archway, heedless of the gossips.*]

JUNIPER

Even so, little sheep. And her too we found, [*looking at ASSUNTA*] coming away out of the woods to Gubbio,—spent and fainting. But

the babe . . . we sought for, even in the place where she had laid it for safe-keeping, under a certain tree; the babe we sought for . . . and found not.

[BROTHER LEO *waters the ass at the fountain, regarding ASSUNTA with pity.*

Enter above at the top of the steps, NICOLO, a robust and voluble man of Gubbio.

NICOLO

[*descending*]

—The bishop's ass!

[BROTHER LEO *leads the ass off under the archway, and returns.*

THE PEOPLE

[*still staring at ASSUNTA*]

—Found not?

—Why, then it is lost!

—It may be stolen,—stolen by witches.

—Dead of the cold!

—Eaten of wolves!

[ASSUNTA, *bearing, shudders*]

LEO

Ah, Messer Nicolo, you are the one to help

us. Take her in, for the love of Our Lady. She is perishing of sorrow; — her man gone, her babe —

BIMBO

No, he is n't the one, Nicolo is n't, — not he!

BIMBA

— For she was telling us as she came, how he would n't let them stay over the feast of the blessed Nativity; for they had n't brought enough money with them to last, and she could n't walk all the way to Arezzo.

NICOLO

Ah, you magpies! What will you, what will you? — Tell not this to holy Francis! Was I not going, this hour, this minute, what you will, to lay before holy Francis all that I have and more? — The moment I should behold him coming upon the lord bishop's ass? — As to the woman, what will you? Did she not come here three days back, and her man along with her, too? — A potter, he said, — of Foligno!

THE POTTER

[*with rancor unspeakable*]

Ah, ah, Foligno!—*Foligno, Fossato, Spello?*
—*Pab!*

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

— And thinking to come to Arezzo for the holy season, she with a babe of days in her arms!

THE DYER'S WIFE

— Yes, we all saw it! What a thing! Starting to walk all the way to Arezzo with the babe, and yet unable. Could we help it that she was a weakling?

NICOLO

— Could we help it that she had not where-with to pay? Marry, why did they set out to walk, then, if they could n't walk?

LEO

Brother, for holy Charity, you are the host of this place. Take her back to the inn; and let us search till we find . . . that which is lost.

NICOLO

But, indeed, Fra Leo, there is no room at the

inn; no room, whatever, in reason, at all; no-wise, — none, none! [*With copious indignation.*] Have I not told you all? And did I not, when I sent them off, tell both the two and the babe likewise? And am I not telling you again? — How I was bidden to make all room and preparation for a great nobleman out of France, who is coming this day, and maybe this hour, with his six gentlemen, to sup and to stop and to lie here this night, and who can tell how long after?

LUCIA

It's the simple truth we are telling. Six gentlemen with him. — I go to bring fresh water now with my own hands.

NICOLO

We have no room for beggars . . . Nor for any potter from Foligno; nor for his wife; nor to crown all, a swaddled creature of days! wauling day and night! — For what else would it be doing, if I let it stay by me? —

LUCIA

[*placidly*]

— The simple truth.

LEO

[to ASSUNTA]

Come, my Sister, thou shalt not go away. Nay, if the inn be full, — even so as it was when Our Lady came to Bethlehem, — there shall be some place yet. Think no scorn to rest thee even in a shed, — an if there be a shed . . .

NICOLO

[*with equal beat pointing up under the arch*]

An if there be a shed! — There is a very fine shed indeed; warm as a hay-field and safe as the Duomo. And an ox the finest in Umbria; — he cannot get his horns out of the door without goring any that come down by the steps! Hay? — the finest of any: — take care not to tread it down! And mind you tell the holy Francis this: — I make you free of the shed, free as air of the shed; so long as you tread not down the hay.

THE DYER'S WIFE

There now, and it *is* a snug place too, tho' Nicolo says it.

THE DYER

As for his donkey, —

508 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE FURRIER

— '*Pantaleone!*'

NICOLO

— What of him? What of him?

THE DYER

He is the most marvellous donkey that walks without wings!

NICOLO

So he is! So he is!

THE DYER'S WIFE

Eh? He cockers and coddles his great ox more than we do our chickens.

NICOLO

— Or your children either, — your children either, since you can't even keep them in a pen! — [*To his daughter.*] Run along with you; fetch the water and have done. I thought it had been the nobleman of France himself, when I looked out and saw the lord bishop's ass.

[*Exit above.* — BROTHER LEO assists AS-SUNTA to rise from the edge of the fountain; and the gossips ply her with questions to which she seems deaf.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 509

THE BAKER

[*calling*]

— And why, I ask you, did your man leave you there?

THE DYER

— And why did you try to walk the longest way round to Arezzo?

THE POTTER

— And why did you set down the babe in the snow?

BIMBO *and* BIMBA

Under a juniper-bush she laid it—

— When she saw the robber coming—

JUNIPER

Forshe mistrusted his benignity. She doubted by the look of his face, how the oil of goodness was wanting in him;— which was indeed true.

BIMBO

— And her man was gathering faggots, just like us—

BIMBA

— When the other caught him.— And it might have been us!—

THE DYER'S WIFE

'Tis so, — 't is so, well it might. Oh, heavenly mercy ! Be off, little plagues. The worry you cost your granddam this day. You might have been stolen [*cuffing* BIMBO], you might have been lost [*cuffing* BIMBA]. You might have been frozen to the bone ; you might have been eaten of wolves, into collops ! — [*Cuffing both before her.*] Into the house, little desolations of my life !

LEO

[*to* ASSUNTA]

Come, Lady : and be cheered concerning the babe. For thou shalt rest and think on him who lay, even as thou shalt, among the gentle beasts and warm in the hay.

[*He takes ASSUNTA to the ox-shed under the archway and returns. BROTHER JUNIPER collects the faggots up near the foot of the steps and stands forth, rubbing his hands.*

JUNIPER

And where shall the pot be found, for so great a feast ? The pot that shall do honor to this

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 511

vigil, with an abounding *minestrone* — a very lordly noble broth?

THE DYER'S WIFE

If the pot were all you wanted, holy father, we have a great kettle within, — and empty enough to please you!

[BIMBO and BIMBA fetch out a great iron pot which they take to JUNIPER, with sundry trappings to set it up.]

BIMBA

But, Brother Juniper, where is the feast?

JUNIPER

Why, little pigeons, behold the firewood ready, — and this goodly great pot yawning empty; and here be all the open mouths. It doth but remain for the Lord to send us some little portion of His largess, — that ye may all eat abundantly and be filled!

THE PEOPLE

[*with mixed emotions*]

Ah, ah!

JUNIPER

Nay, here a little, there a little. We shall put all together and make a great feast, doubt not. Give each the little he hath, — with the little more from up there [*pointing to the upper square*], and it shall be multiplied to all your hungers. —

THE PEOPLE

[*ruefully*]

Ah!

[*The singing of ST. FRANCIS is heard dimly approaching.*]

JUNIPER

[*wistfully*]

I speak as a fool . . . Yet love bloweth the fire, and the fire shall boil the pot, and — [*the singing nearer.*] Peace, sweet brothers, he comes at last! —

[*Runs up to look under the archway, and calls back.*]

He comes, — Brother Francis! — and a most marvellous great dog, leaping beside, — rejoicing with holy gladness!

[*Enter ST. FRANCIS and THE WOLF*]

[*For the following scene, THE WOLF prances in, full of buoyancy, — checked every little while by his dread of recognition and by the novelty of the thing. He is filled with curiosity towards place and people. — Now and then he shies violently at a sudden hostile association, — a twinge of conscience — or a scent !*

At first he occupies the stage centre, up, — wary and reserved, till FRANCIS beckons him ; — rolling his eyes, tongue out, like a sagacious dog. — Later, he dashes in and out of the sheltering arcades, stands on his hind legs and looks in at windows and out on the people. The folk at first show some fear and astonishment ; then reassurance, — he seems the dog so completely.

THE PEOPLE OF GUBBIO

[*flocking towards FRANCIS*]

— Blessed Francis ! — Blessed Francis ! —
Francis of Assisi ! — Little Poor Man ! — Little
Poor Man !

JUNIPER

[*all eyes for THE WOLF*]

Brother Francis, little Father ! Whoever beheld such a —

514 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

BIMBO *and* BIMBA

— Oh, what a funny, great big dog !

THE DYER'S WIFE

— Holy Father, what a dog !

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

That hide ! Those teeth ! —

THE DYER

See, see, see ! It's the seraphic little Father's dog ! —

LUCREZIA

[*a blind old woman*]

Holy Francis, are you come at last ? To keep the feast with us hungry ones ? —

THE BAKER

Ay, holy Francis heard us call !

FRANCIS

Peace be to all !

Peace unto every smallest one

Foregathered here, with Brother Sun.

[*Toucking the children's heads ; they draw back from THE WOLF.*]

BIMBA

Oh, Father, what a fearful beast! —
He's so much like —

LUCIA

[*with upraised hands*]

— A wolf, at least!

THE WOMEN

Ah!

THE DYER

I never saw, — not with these eyes,
A dog of such a size. . . .

THE DYER'S WIFE

Precisely like a wolf.

THE DYER

— In all ways, like a wolf.
I never saw —

THE BAKER

Nor I, indeed, —
A dog of such a breed.
Just like a wolf.

516 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

OTHERS

Yes, yes!

FRANCIS

Indeed,

He *is* so!

THE FURRIER

Girth and hide, —

FRANCIS

[*heartily*]

And speed!

Sooth, for his name, in case of need,

I call him — ‘*Brother Wolf*.’

[*They laugh.* — THE WOLF *rolls his eyes as if words failed.* LEO and JUNIPER *approach him wonderingly.* THE WOLF, *after a sidelong glance and sniff at each, licks his hand once; and sits still, lapping his chops with inexpressible discretion.*

FRANCIS

And for his courtesy? To-day

He fellowed me the livelong way: —

Look, Juniper, he ought to be

A brother of our company;

For all his prowess and his pride,
He wears his shirt of hair outside,
. . . Even at the holy tide !

BIMBO

But he's just like a wolf.

FRANCIS

[*heartily*]

Yea, so !

And do you wish to see him go
Upright, and walking ?

CHILDREN

Yes — yes, yes !

FRANCIS

So. Brother, of thy gentleness,
Wilt thou stand up before our sight,
Even as a man, — for more delight,
And walk upright ?

[THE WOLF, *surprised and gratified, tries it and succeeds, to his pride and pleasure. He paces several steps with dignity, and sits down again with a 'Wuff,' — a sneezy note of achievement. Chorus of pleasure from the by-standers.*

FRANCIS

[*to them*]

Ye will have no more fear, to-day?

ALL

—No, no !

—Did you see him walk?

Did you see him play?

[ST. FRANCIS crosses, left, to greet the old people in their doorways. THE WOLF, who keeps discreetly near him, examines each interior, standing on his hind legs with quivering interest.]

JUNIPER

[*to THE BAKER*]

And might it be, dear man, you have a loaf now, or other good thing, to give to the poor soul we found in the woods? And herself laid by to rest in the stable-shed?

THE BAKER

[*querulously*]

Good things? — To give away! Not I, not I. Ah, to be asking good things of me, and for a potter's wife of Foligno, — and my sons away

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 519

warring at the gate of Perugia!—And not a morsel in the house but what I have to bake with my own hands . . . and scarce a tooth left me . . . and the hard winter on us, and a cold spring coming after . . . and the very Wolf at the door!—

[THE WOLF *skies suddenly behind the Saint with the hint of a growl.*

And the very dogs snarling at the old!—

[ST. FRANCIS *looks in sweetly, and cheers* THE BAKER: THE WOLF *reconnoitres.* THE DYER *and his wife greet the Saint by their own doorway;—yellow hands on* THE DYER, *and blue on his wife.*

FRANCIS

[*to* THE BAKER]

Take heart, man dear! this very day

Is bearing blessing on the way.

We little fellows all are here

To bring you cheer;

That you shall take, and turn, and make

To fair white bread for hunger's sake!

THE BAKER

Eh?

FRANCIS

Gather we all from door to door,
 A little, from a little store.
 Ah, dear my children, look and see
 That little turn a treasury
 To certain poorer than ye be!
 [*To THE DYER'S WIFE*]
 So, Monna Piera! Come, what cheer?

THE DYER'S WIFE

— Oh, was there ever such a year!

[*In one breath*]

Piero gone, Gentile, Giuseppe, all fighting
 at the gates of Perugia! — Piero's wife ailing,
 Gentile's wife looking towards another! —
 Giuseppe had no wife at all to help me with the
 dye in nowise; — the dye, the children, the
 chickens! Only myself at the dye-vats with him
 [*pointing to her husband*] day in, day out. —
 Like an old hen clucking after three broods at
 once; — not a moment for a word with a
 gossip save on the high holy-days; and even
 then, the color will not off! Look you! [*Hold-
 ing up her azure hands.*]

[*THE WOLF reënters unnoticed for the moment.*]

FRANCIS

Yea, Monna Piera, verily! —
As blue as any fleur-de-lys
The earliest spring can bring to blow
Along a meadow.

THE DYER'S WIFE

[*proudly*]

Eh? 'T is so!

THE DYER

— A noble, fast, clinging color, that floods
cannot destroy. But who buys? The blue stone
I powdered up five years ago is hardly gone;—
As for saffron —

THE DYER'S WIFE

— We've never sold enough to pay for the
color of his two hands! O Little Man of God,
what a year, what a year! 't is all as he said
[*pointing to THE BAKER*]; our young men away,
and our young women pining, and the hard
winter coming, and the Wolf at the door! O
Little Poor Man, what a year!

THE WOLF

[*aside*]

There's an idea!

[*Exit by THE DYER'S alley*]

THE DYER

What is the dog growling at?

THE FURRIER

[*joining them*]

— Why wouldn't any dog growl?— The taxes on fur, Father Francis! I had as lief to keep the live beasts lodging by me, to eat us out of house and home. And now with fighting the Perugians, we shall sell them no fur these twenty years to come. As to this town and lordship, — who buys so much as the ear of a squirrel?

THE DYER'S WIFE

[*pointing to THE FURRIER'S WIFE*]

And who can afford to be wearing a hood set round about with fox-tails?

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

To save it from the moths and rust, — the

moths and rust, alone. No one in this desolate sorry spot would spend a soldo on a neighbor's wares.

THE POTTER

[*calling out grumblingly*]

What is that to me? What is that to me? You can eat up the creatures you catch, and wear their skins after. But if no man buy my pots, can I eat them again? Hee — hee! — I can make little jugs and big jugs, — *scodelle, boccali, tondini!* But I cannot eat them, for all the teeth I have. And they make little jugs and big jugs too, at Foligno, Fossato, Spello, — *Pab!* — And my last son away at the war; — and the harvest a mock, and the vintage worse, and the long winter coming, and the spring after that, and the summer next, but that's not the end; and all with the Wolf at the door! —

[THE WOLF, *reëntering, shrinks close to FRANCIS and paws at him for attention. The children observe it.*]

BIMBA

Look, Father, look! Who ever saw —

524 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

BIMBO

He has a splinter in his paw !

[THE WOLF *tugs at the habit of ST. FRANCIS, with a show of pain. The gossips watch a moment, then resume their wrangling at THE BAKER'S doorway ; some assist JUNIPER to set up his pot with a hook and iron braces.*

THE BAKER

— And well he knows only a holy man would have the patience to take it out of a great wild beast like that. A-ah ! [*With disfavor.*

FRANCIS

Nay, Brother Wolf, come here with me.
Give me thy hand, to see.

THE WOLF

[*muttering rapidly while he submits his paw with some complacency in being petted*]

— Thorn in each paw, and every ear full !
O Little Man, but this is fearful.

. O miserere !

How can I be both calm and wary ?

How can I look both ways securely?

— They 'll know me, surely.

Hearken. Just now, I made a sally

Into the Dyer's, by that alley.

And there, brimful and just inside,

Is a whole vat, two metres wide,

A rare, deep blue.

— Would n't that do? —

No man could ever know this hide;

Come on; — you have me — dyed!

There's saffron there, if you prefer . . .

Not much, though; for it's costlier.

— Beside,

These cackling wives and make-shift men

Might take me for a sheep-dog then. —

FRANCIS

[*laughing over him*]

What, Brother Wolf, for all thy pride,

And would'st thou hide?

THE WOLF

[*nervously*]

Whose hide? — Maybe my courage fails, —

A penance for my sins . . .

But do avoid the man of Skins, —

And his helpmeet, of a hundred tails!

526 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

FRANCIS

A kindly man, of wants and woes.
Why should he guess?

THE WOLF

[*with scorn*]

—Has he a nose?

[*Walks to leeward of the Saint towards
THE FURRIER'S empty booth, to view the
small exhibit of hanging skins, with fevered
curiosity.*]

Kind! . . . And what do you think of
those? —

[*Sniffs excitedly and shies away, right. The
people notice, as FRANCIS crosses to them
again.*]

THE DYER

Eh, eh? No wonder he makes shy of Nello's
shop! That skin of his would fetch a fine price
any day, — for a mock-wolf hide.

THE WOLF

[*overbearing*]

Mock-wolf! Gr—r—r . . .

THE POTTER

[from his doorway right]

Bah! — *via, via!*

[THE WOLF avoids him, and goes to the next door — OLD LUCREZIA'S — where he shows signs of panic. She sits in the doorway, blindly spinning, with a little hand distaff.]

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

[complacently]

Ay, he would make the best of furs.

THE BAKER

Faith, 't is the crossest of all curs. —

BIMBA

[following THE WOLF]

No, no! — His tail is full of burrs!

THE WOLF

[to himself]

. . . Now, will you hear? —

. . . There's an idea!

[Backs up to FRANCIS again, with signs of distress. The people laugh, while FRANCIS follows THE WOLF apart, and inquires of his hurt.]

THE DYER'S WIFE

Like a great baby! —

FRANCIS

[*to THE WOLF*]

. . . Dost thou ail?

THE WOLF

[*in a gruff aside*]

No, no, it's not my tail.

No, it's my past . . . that's on my mind.

Why can't that stay behind?

Hist . . . do you see that woman there?

The old one, with the silver hair?

She'll know me!

FRANCIS

Brother, she is blind.

BIMBO

[*watching from across the way*]

Hear how he whines. —

BIMBA

— He had good cause.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 529

BIMBO

— And licks his paws.

THE WOLF

[*while ST. FRANCIS strokes his ears, and disengages a burr or two*]

O Little Man, . . . I am not more than human ;
— I cannot face that woman.

Look, once . . . Oh, years and years ago, —
Her garden 's at the back, you know . . .

FRANCIS

[*with pain and pity*]

Ah, tears of weary women still !

THE WOLF

[*dolorously*]

Say what you will . . .

But is n't it what all wolves do ?

FRANCIS

Prey on the helpless? Yea, not you
Alone, my Brother. All wolves do.

530 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE WOLF

And I was hungry . . . after Lent;

And so . . . I went . . .

[Whispers to ST. FRANCIS, whose face shows deep feeling.]

Hm-hm. — I did, and open-eyed . . .

And a young lamb, beside !

FRANCIS

[crossing with sweet concern to OLD LUCREZIA]

Monna Lucrezia, of your grace,

Will you sit here, a little space,

And warm you in the lovely sun,

Until your weaving's done ?

And this, my Brother here, shall be

A footstool for you, joyfully ;

To make your comfort full,

The while you card the wool.

[She feels her way out into the sunlight, smiling, and sits upon a bench. THE WOLF, obedient to FRANCIS' sign, crouches before her, so that she rests her feet on his back. He is the picture of abject misery.]

And come you, all, till the noon is done,

Singing and working, every one,

For praise of Brother Sun !

Shall we not all, both young and old
 Sing away want,—sing away cold?
 Shall we not make our thresholds sweet,
 Even as though we looked to see
 Our Lady, riding presently
 Even adown this street? —
*[They catch the infection of his happiness and
 shed their woes and grumblings suddenly.]*

THE BAKER

*[laughing in sudden youth, while they look at
 him with amazement]*

Eh? — Old as I am, and full of care,—
 Yet I could swear,
 If holy Francis do but pass,
 The snow turns feathers; and all the air
 Is mild as Martinmas!

[singing]

I am the Baker of Gubbio;
 And the longer I live, the older I grow!
 But when I can no more of bread,
 Manna shall be my food instead.

Hosanna,

Hosanna,

Good wine, and mellow manna!

[To THE POTTER]

Eh? neighbor, are you dumb this day?

532 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

FRANCIS

[*to THE POTTER, who is turning a bowl on his wheel*]

Not he, not he! — Whose hands have skill
To turn and shape, and warm at will,
 This cold and trembling clay : —
Of feeble clasp and quivering lips,
 All shaken with dismay ;
Ah, *Povero!* the brother-thing, —
A creature weak and perishing, —
Look, through his guiding hand it slips,
Wrought now to stand and laugh, — and sing !

THE POTTER

[*elated*]

. Eh, eh?

[*He turns his wheel, singing*]

Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!

Round you go, round you go;

Round as the sun,

So, — so ;

With a lip to sing,

And a lip to pour : —

When the draught is done,

God send us more !

THE WOLF

Bravo! — wfff . . .

LUCREZIA

[*singing*]

Weave and spin;

Spin and weave;

Ever since our mother Eve

Did begin!

Little lamb, — O white of wool,

Keep you white and beautiful.

Give you peace, give you peace;

You shall give me of your fleece.

Never shall Our Lady grieve,

While I weave,

While I weave

This, — so moonlike white and fair,

To shield Him from the bitter air,

Her Lamb, her blessed Son,

. . . Her One.

[*All laugh sweetly in her praise. THE WOLF
crawls out from under her feet, in dog-like
distress of conscience.*]

FRANCIS takes a rush-basket from THE
BAKER'S window, and turns back to THE
WOLF.

FRANCIS

See, Brother Wolf, I bid thee take

This in thy teeth, a little space ;
 And even as a helpful hound,
 Go now thy round,
 Asking of each a little grace,
 For pity's sake. —

[*He puts the handle in THE WOLF's mouth.*

THE WOLF trots off with BROTHER LEO.
From time to time, he reappears — setting down before JUNIPER various contributions to the pot-au-feu, — a fowl, a string of onions, peppers, a hare. JUNIPER is zealously boiling the pot over the fire, with help and advice from the children, some of whom are mothering small swaddled babies, child-fashion, as they look on.

LUCIA comes down from the fountain, spilling water out of her copper vessel all the way. ST. FRANCIS meets her with smiling protest.

FRANCIS

But . . . of your courtesy, my daughter . . .
 Deal gently with her preciousness. —

LUCIA

— Eh? —

FRANCIS

. . . . Yes, —

Our Sister Water.

She is so lowly, and so clear, —

Gladness to see, and mirth to hear;

Laughing, for very purity,

— Laughing to thee and me!

LUCIA

*[breaking into song, with other girls who fill their
jars also at the fountain]*

Water, water, Sister dear

Silver sweet, — silver clear,

Sweet as laughter in the sun,

Sparkle, drip and run!

Wash the ways before her feet,

Lest there pass along our street,

The blessed, blessed One.

A CAGED BLACKBIRD

San Francesco!

San Francesco!

— D' Assisi!

— D' Assisi!

— D' Assisi!

536 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

[JUNIPER *leaves his pot-au-feu, and comes down, pointing out to ST. FRANCIS the nearest babe, now in BIMBA'S arms.*

JUNIPER

Seraphic little father, do but see this Babe, how it is marked for the religious life. Poverty and perfect obedience, and silence! Not a word out of him since I came. And his head as bare as a friar's! Heaven itself gave him the tonsure.

BIMBA and BIMBO

[*laughing*]

Oh, Brother Juniper, it's just a baby. Like any other baby! [*To it.*] *Povero!* —

[THE WOLF, *reëntering at the moment, drops his basket and approaches, to sniff at the centre of interest.*

BIMBA

Look! How he loves babies!

[THE WOLF *skies off, in sudden panic*]

JUNIPER

[*of the baby*]

Would he not serve right well, Father Francis, for our vigil and feast this night, of the Crib? — the blessed Babe in the Manger?

ALL

[*excitedly*]

Oh, blessed Francis! — Dear Brother
Juniper! Shall we have such a sight? — Here?
— Where? — How?

LUCIA

Shall *we* have a show, as the people did at
Greccio?

FRANCIS

Sooth, you shall have such blessedness,
You, too, beloved, and no less.

BIMBO *and* BIMBA

With lights?

— And torches?

LUCIA

— Banners?

FRANCIS

Yes!

With all fair things, for loveliness!
Gathered together, every one,
Here in this place when day is done;

538 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

And we shall picture, as we may,
The stall where once the Blessed lay,
With ox and ass among the hay.

BIMBA

Oh, lights!

FRANCIS

— Yes, every way of light,
To make the shadow bright ; —
To make the dark see clear.
And where is she, — that mothering one
That with her little swaddled son
Shall be Our Lady here?

[LUCIA *would step forward, but* JUNIPER
interposes timidly.

JUNIPER

Father Francis, . . . the poorsoul I told you
of, yonder in the ox-shed ! — she and the ox-
shed together, put it even in my dull head —

FRANCIS

Yea, so ! — and of a certainty,
Right meet it is. This holy night
She shall be crownèd, verily ; —
After her hunger and her thirst,
She that was last shall be the first,
In all men's sight.

LUCIA

[*shrilly*]

— But she's lost the baby!

THE DYER'S WIFE

— And thou hast none!

FRANCIS

And let you take good heed apart,
How you may comfort her sad heart.
As to Our Lady and her Son,
Do honor to this broken one;
Until the wilderness abound;—
And the lost lamb be found.

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

— But which is to be the holy Bambino?

BIMBO *and* BIMBA

— Who is to be for the Baby?

[*The women flock round St. FRANCIS, holding out their swaddled babes for his eyes. The Saint looks on them smiling and touches them tenderly, putting them by, one by one, with a gentle shrewdness.*]

FRANCIS

Ah, Monna Piera?

THE DYER'S WIFE

[*proudly*]

. . . Son of my son!

FRANCIS

Sweet peace be on this little one.

LUCIA

Look, look! this *bimba* here, — my niece!

BIMBA

[*calling over its head*]

And mine!

FRANCIS

The Lord give thee His peace: —
 And thee . . . and thee . . . His nested loves!
 Sooth, they are like a swarm of doves;
 Cooing, and soft . . . and breathing warm,
 Doves in a swarm!

THE DYER'S WIFE

Behold him!

[*Thrusting nearer*]

FRANCIS

Ah . . . and yet, methinks .

THE DYER'S WIFE

Look you, how piously he blinks !

FRANCIS

Yea, so.

THE DYER'S WIFE

— And warm and rosy-red .

FRANCIS

But ah, my little ones, ye see
When Love the Lord came, verily,
Could He have been so rosy-red,
Who had no shelter to His head ?

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

Ecco! — 't is liker . . .

[*Holding out her own grandchild*]

FRANCIS

. . . Yet, not quite.
These little hands are folded tight ;
And His, methinks, were open wide.

Nothing had He, save love alone,
 Who came, a Lamb withouten spot,
 Came, in the cold, unto His own :
 And they received Him not.

[As with a sudden thought]

Is there, maybe, some smallest one,
 Poor of the poorest ? — Nay, outcast ?
 Of all forlorn, the least and last ?
 Hungering, naked, — turned away
 Mayhap this very day ? —
 Or with no otherwhere to go
 Save wandering in the snow ?

THE WOMEN

No, indeed, little Father ! — We be all good
 mothers here ; we give our children the best we
 have. They never want for anything long, that
 they want with discretion !

JUNIPER

[interposing again with beaming helpfulness]

Father Francis, the poor woman ye wot of
 yonder in the ox-shed ; that is her case to the
 last feather ! Sore misprized, and turned away,
 and with no otherwhere to go. —

FRANCIS

Brother, if this be so,
No babe but hers is in such case
To fill that holy place!
Hungering? — Spent, and cold?

JUNIPER

[*enraptured*]

There with the Ox, — behold! —

FRANCIS

An outcast stranger.

THE PEOPLE

[*clamorously*]

— It's lost; it's gone; —
— It's lost! It is n't here!
— It is n't here!

FRANCIS

Still seek it, far and near,
Search every spot.

THE PEOPLE

— Yes, Yes, Yes! —

FRANCIS

And if ye find it not,—

THE PEOPLE

— Yes, yes ! — What then ?

FRANCIS

Still there will be . . . the Manger !

[They disperse, trying to conceal their disappointment.]

Reënter at back, BROTHER LEO with a basket.

LEO

These, Brother Francis, my lord the bishop sends to this feast; and would have thee to speak with him shortly, above at the palace.

JUNIPER

[opening the basket, and displaying herbs, eggs, and a dressed sucking-pig]

A most noble . . . little pig . . . of great size [*compassionately*]. Ah . . . brother little Pig ! [*faltering.*]

THE PEOPLE

[*delighted*]

In with it,—into the *brodo*! *Evviva* the lord bishop!

JUNIPER

[*obeying*]

Alas . . . and Alleluia!

LEO

Likewise, my lord the bishop hath given leave to ring the great bell for your assembling, when all is ready.

[THE WOLF *shows some excitement, looking up at the tower.*

FRANCIS, *with a smiling gesture of adieu, makes as if to go; the people disperse to their houses.* BROTHER LEO, *up, assists* JUNIPER.

THE WOLF *comes down to meet* FRANCIS.

THE WOLF

Lasso! . . . Ah, do not go away;

Some evil thing will chance, I know.

. . . . Ah, do not go.

FRANCIS

Not yet secure?

546 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE WOLF

No, no. — Ah, stay!

I'm not at ease, not for a minute!

This miming, — why did I begin it?

They 'll trap me by the conscience, — and then
skin it!

FRANCIS

[*coaxingly*]

Ah! —

THE WOLF

They suspect: else why that flick

'Chick nor child, — child nor chick!'

They know the best where things can prick:

— Wf! 't is a human trick!

[*Dislike and suspicion flare up, in his glances
towards the houses.*]

FRANCIS

Ah no!

THE WOLF

But yes! And let me hear once more,

Their endless taunt of *Wolf, Wolf at the
door!* —

FRANCIS

My Brother! — 'T is no mock at thee.

THE WOLF

[*sternly*]

There is no other Wolf for it to be:
No peer of mine.

FRANCIS

Thou'rt fevered with remorse.

THE WOLF

[*cautiously*]

N-n . . . Of course.

But I am grown a proverb, do you see?

. It's me.

There is none other like me. No,
I am The Wolf of Gubbio.

FRANCIS

No. 'Tis the name they have for poverty.

THE WOLF

[*outraged*]

Their poverty! To put my name
On that black dolor of all shame? —

FRANCIS

The dread of want, that haunts the poor.

THE WOLF

[*barkingly*]

Wolf-at-the-Door? Wolf-at-the-Door?

To blame on *me* their poverty! . . .

And what of all that went before?

What of their famines and their war

— War — War?

FRANCIS

Even so, Brother. — Come, dost see?

Juniper lacks thy ministry.

He is a true-heart; trust him; — so.

THE WOLF

. . . . Ah, must you go?

FRANCIS

To come again.

THE WOLF

[*ruefully*]

. . . . Ahi! — watch and pray. —

But . . . oh, they'll have my hide some day!

[*Looking back at THE FURRIER'S*]

And if they do, when . . . when I best can
spare it, —

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 549

Hist! Poverello, tell me, will you wear it?

None of this folk;—I could n't bear it!

[*Exit FRANCIS with a laughing caress to THE WOLF's ears. BROTHER LEO joins him. They go out, centre. THE WOLF watches them off, then waddles dejectedly over to JUNIPER and the pot, not without suspicion. He utters a whining, experimental note.*]

JUNIPER

[*simply, as to a question*]

Yea, it is so, indeed.

[*THE WOLF sbies with astonishment*]

THE WOLF

Wuff.

JUNIPER

Nay, you will like it, I make certain, Brother Wolf; what with rosemary and sweet basil . . .

THE WOLF

[*cautiously*]

Wfff.

JUNIPER

But only wait till I have cooked all well together, and it will be good . . . better than the raw flesh of Heathenesse. — I crave your pardon, Brother.

THE WOLF

What's that? . . .

JUNIPER

This word I used, of 'Heathenesse.' But you will forgive it, Brother Wolf. For indeed it is very gently done for you to be talking and reasoning with me, — a poor silly simpleton, the fool among the brothers, with no sayings or no words in me at all to match the cunning of the beasts!

[THE WOLF *backs away from him, dumfounded.*

THE WOLF

Ha! — . . . Words may fail . . .

. . . But not a tail. —

[*Wags it and makes friendly with* JUNIPER, *who stirs the pot, lifting something to view now and then with his skillet.* . . . THE WOLF *on his hind legs looks into the pot.*

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 551

JUNIPER

[*stirring*]

Poor Brother Hare!

THE WOLF

[*commiserating*]

Ah, *Povero*, — gone under!

JUNIPER

Would his own mother know him now?

THE WOLF

[*with a flourish of his tongue*]

. . . I wonder.

JUNIPER

Yet, if he needs must perish, to be sure,
He shall as it were —

THE WOLF

Refresh the poor!

Do they go hungry then, another year?

[*Meditates*] . . . Queer.

Bravo, bravo, you're a good fellow. —

Wf! — This broth begins to mellow.

[*Windows open right and left, and inquiring
noses turn toward the pot-au-feu. BIMBO
and BIMBA and THE DYER'S WIFE ap-
pear. She throws a handful of herbs.*]

THE DYER'S WIFE

Brother, Brother Juniper! It will want some spice now . . . I've nothing to throw in the pot, but here's a few herbs!

CHILDREN

[calling]

Throw them in, and then you'll see!
Basil — fennel — rosemary!

THE POTTER

[from his window]

Yes, and here, some sprigs of bay!

THE WOLF

What are they?

[JUNIPER picks them up, and puts them in, while THE WOLF grins sagaciously at the houses, with growing sarcasm.]

Oh, I see . . . These goodly saviors
Call forth unaccustomed favors.

I am not alone there! — No;

Little wolves of Gubbio! *[Spitefully.]*

[He crosses and looks in a window]

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 553

WOMAN'S VOICE

Eh? — It's only that wild dog. Be off! —
I've nothing more.

THE WOLF

[*aside*]

Nothing? . . . Only when she pleases.

Truly! . . . (Row on row of cheeses.)

Here is somewhat. . . .

[*Missile flies through the window*]

JUNIPER

— *Miserere!*

THE WOLF

Largess, largess!

[*Another follows*]

. Hm! . . . Be wary . . .

Can't recall that I've abused her. [*Thinks.*]

Oh. — But then, . . . an ageing rooster!

JUNIPER

[*stirring*]

. This should be a most exalted
Minestrone.

554 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE WOLF

Is it salted?

JUNIPER

[*running to a jar*]

Salt, in sooth, more salt. — [*Admiringly.*] Ah,
thou!

. . . But if I had some saffron, now, —

THE WOLF

Saffron?

JUNIPER

A pinch.

THE WOLF

The yellow in the vat?

— Do you mean that?

[*Goes to the house; JUNIPER marvels*]

JUNIPER

The Dyer's! San Rufino of Assisi!

THE WOLF

. . . . That's easy.

[*Scratches at the door and retreats*]

— You ask him.

[*THE DYER looks out.*]

THE DYER

If it's anything — Oh, 't is the wild dog alone.
— Get away !

THE DYER'S WIFE

Be off, then ! What do you look for ? [*Sees JUNIPER's petitionary attitude.*] Ask the neighbors ! As for us, we have n't enough in the cupboard for chick nor child ; and the long winter before us, and the bad vintage behind us, and the Wolf — [*The door slams.*]

[THE WOLF *skies off, looking ugly*]

JUNIPER

I would that our sister's heart might be warmed of holy Charity, to go comfort her in the ox-shed. — [*Pointing up.*] 'Chick nor child,' — alas ! — And where is hers, this winter day ?

[THE WOLF *glares at him with sudden suspicion.* JUNIPER *innocently rambles on, stirring.*]

How would it wound her to the quick ! — Poor soul, withouten child or chick.

[THE WOLF *mutters, still eying him*]

Nay, Brother. Is it lacking aught ?

[THE WOLF *sbrinks from him, towards THE BAKER's house.*]

556 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE BAKER

[*thrusting his head out*]

Yah! — Be-off! — Get you gone, *Lupone*, —
Rubaccio! Via — via — via!

[*Throwing an empty flask at him*]

JUNIPER

'Tis done. 'Tis done . . . smoking and ready ;
now will I ring the bell.

THE WOLF

[*barsbly*]

— And then,
The pack comes scrabbling back again ;
The creatures yapping discontent ; —
Animals that have lost their scent !
Noble reason throned, indeed ! —
To hunt and fight and feed !

[*He begins to look devilish*]

JUNIPER

[*mildly, his hands folded*]

Ah, Brother Wolf, I would n't say that. For
who can upbraid them, disheartened as they are
with the war and the cold, —

THE WOLF

'*And the long winter coming!*' — Yes? Yes? Yes? — *And! and! and!* —

JUNIPER

[*seriously*]

Yes, and a sorry vintage. — And the very Wolf at the door! [*He turns, not noticing THE WOLF's fury, and goes up as if to ring the bell: then turns back.*] Stay! First will I sweep all clean . . . Had I a broom now? . . . [*Looks doubtfully right and left.*] I will go and ask my lord bishop, in the name of the blessed Michael and all angels, . . . to lend me a broom! Then is there nought left save to ring the great bell.

[*Exit.*]

THE WOLF

[*alone*]

[*His voice and manner change him to a crackling cynic*]

The Bell. [*He glances upward.*] So this was all it meant. . . . I knew it would n't last. — One of these sudden conversions. . . . Voice . . . face . . . music . . . queer feelings . . . — Then where is it all? — I would n't be a man if I could. There's only one, [*with a sidelong*

glance after FRANCIS' exit] . . . probably not a man at all; something new.—Perhaps back in the woods—Wf! [*Showing sudden abject guilt, as he steals a look at the ox-shed.*] . . . If he knew that? Not he! . . . No. [*Defiantly.*] I will have my day, I will have my day! . . . And after,—back to the woods. Ah, where's the use?

.
 What was I left watching for?
 Saints could do no more!

[*Dashes from house to house, peering in, trying the next window, and muttering with growing excitement.*

Hm!—One rocking at a cradle;—

Baling something with a ladle . . .

Tying kerchiefs; . . . making fine . . .

[*A slap is heard and outcry of children*]

Two—three—four . . . and all to dine?

Ah, my beauty, why such airs?—

Hi! The potter . . . saying his prayers!

Tries her wimple . . . what a wearer!

Just one snarl, now, would it scare her?

(Lento, lento) . . . *Buona sera!*

.
 Washing, truly. Dozing? Heaven!—

Three, no, no, — four, five, six, seven

Hungry humans . . . Call it theft!

Eight? — There will be nothing left.

[*Goes to THE FURRIER'S: stands up, quivering with excitement at sight of the skins, recognizing old friends.*

Hide and hair, it makes me creep! . . .

Is n't this worse than taking sheep

When you're hungry? — Steal and wear

Others' skins? to make you fair?

Murderers so debonair!

Ah, ah! — [*With an outburst of grief.*

So this was where she went,

For all the longing search we spent! . . .

Oh, Silver Glory's radiant fur!

What woman lives to match with her?

Wind-swift! — Her eyes two yellow suns! —

Fighting for all her little ones,

The cursèd winter Snarl was trapped . . .

— If ever I see a woman wrapped

In all that beauty not her own,

That strength she could not meet alone, —

Something she never fought nor fed,

Cold — stolen — duped and dead! —

[*THE FURRIER'S wife, speaking back, appears at the window, takes down a mantle of wolf-skin and puts it over her shoulders, complacently.*

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

— And *I* say I will! For the dusk will be falling cold. And this nobleman of France may be there to look on . . . and what is it worth outside, but to gather dust and covetous desires?

[*Exit within.*]

THE WOLF

[*savagely*]

Never again shall *my* guilt vex *my* wits.

. We're quits!

[*With a snarl, he runs up to the pot, and tramples out the fire beneath. — He stands upright and plunging nose and paws into the pot, voraciously devours everything.*]

From the pot he crosses to the fountain and loudly drinks his fill; pausing to grin with spite, back at the little houses, flourishing his tongue. Skying away from the ox-shed, which he always avoids, he goes up the stone steps on all fours, and disappears, right.

Enter, up left, on the steps, LOUIS of France, followed by his men. All wear pilgrim robes, with palmers' emblems upon them. He descends the steps, and speaks back to them, pointing out the smoking kettle, smilingly.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 561

LOUIS

Pause here. Ye see? The feast is ready set.
To-day shall we break bread with God's own
poor;

And with the holy Francis.

*[Enter below, under the archway, JUNIPER
beaming with joy,—a twig-broom in his
hand, and a white linen cloth on his arm.]*

JUNIPER, not noticing LOUIS, brushes off
the flag-stones round about the kettles first.
Then, seeing the strangers, he advances,
with timid hospitality.

JUNIPER

The Lord give ye His Peace. —

LOUIS

And thee, my brother.
Wilt thou admit a pilgrim?

JUNIPER

Ah, Messer Pilgrim, God's guests are every-
where. — Now am I about to ring the great
bell . . . Then comes little Father Francis
. . . then all! —

*[He hastens up and rings. The people come
in with great expectation as the Bell sounds.]*

Enter FRANCIS and BROTHER LEO — who meet LOUIS, without knowing him, but with radiant friendliness.

JUNIPER returns and hastens to the pot. Plunging in his ladle, he is seen to discover with consternation that it is empty; and stands, first incredulous, then rooted to the ground with woe.

FRANCIS

Peace be upon you ! . . . and on all
This homing flock . . .

[*To LOUIS*]

My Brother dear !

[*To JUNIPER*]

Nay, Juniper . . . But what mischance
Doth cloud thy countenance ?

JUNIPER

[*gaspingly*]

Seraphic little . . . I . . .

. . . there's no . . .

. . . 't is clear

An Angel hath been here . . .

.

The pot is . . . empty ! —

THE PEOPLE OF GUBBIO

My gander . . . my gander . . . the best of them all! — The pot is empty . . . the pot is empty! No festa, no dinner, no *minestrone*! — Oh! Oh! my peppers, my peppers . . . the two last eggs! Gone! — Gone! Devoured! Devoured! Devoured!

THE FURRIER'S WIFE
and THE DYER'S WIFE

An angel indeed! Hear the simple brother who knows not the ways of angels from the ways of ravening beasts! Thieves, thieves it was! —

THE BAKER *and* THE FURRIER

'T was that wolfish cur, — that Beelzebub of a dog, that watched by the pot when last we saw him. — No, no! He could n't — He would n't — No, no! You lie!

THE CHILDREN

[*weeping*]

Oh, oh! The pig! — The little pig — the pretty little pig from the palace!

FRANCIS

[soothing them]

Children, all shall yet be well:
 . . . Trust the blessed spell
 Or this Vigil that we keep.
 Nay, beloved, do not weep.
 Mayhap, for pity of your case,—
 Friend Nicolo will do you grace,
 . . . After a little space.

[NICOLO, *on the street steps, raises his hands in horror. Unable to argue with FRANCIS, he begins to count beads, with increasing desperation.*

FRANCIS

[to the strangers smilingly]

And pardon, gentle Pilgrims all,
 Our emptiness, our windy hall.
 Yea, though ye be full travel-worn
 Yet ye will think no scorn.
 And though ye hunger verily,
 Pray you, bear with me.
 Since neighbor Nicolo, indeed
 Hath his right need

To make all ready, — to prepare
For guests so many . . . unaware; —

[NICOLO's despair bursts out afresh]

Holiday hungers, many more
Than he had reckoned for!

[FRANCIS takes the white cloth from JUNIPER who still stands motionless, and with the playful deliberation of a child, spreads it on the ground in the centre, while all watch open-mouthed, charmed into attention, — a quiet circle.

Right, behind the by-standers, reappears THE WOLF, rolling his eyes as if he defied the situation, till the voice of FRANCIS makes him also a listener, lost to all else. No one sees him. When the folk sit down, at FRANCIS' bidding, he starts up with a dog's excitement at the matter in hand, showing his surprise and curiosity; coming down, by degrees, nearer those who sit with their backs turned towards him. Pangs of conscience alternate with his interest, and wistful looks towards FRANCIS.

566 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

FRANCIS

See. I spread this fair white cloth
For our table. . . . Be not wroth.

[*Coaxingly*]

Cheer thee, Juniper, my brother!
May we not pledge one another
Circled, brother-wise, around?—
. . . Here upon the ground?

[*He sits: they follow suit*]

See. Our court is acres wide;
Guests flock in from every side;
Let us, even as Love would,
Share the bread of brotherhood.

LOUIS

[*to FRANCIS*]

Savors of immortal cheer
Fill us all that listen here,
Holy man and dear.

FRANCIS

Nay, sweet brother: naught I can
Save as a little, base poor man!

But you, of your fair courtesy
 Shall fill us all with warmth and glee;
 Yea, as it were with minstrelsy!

[*The people are quickened; THE WOLF comes down, listening, behind the right-hand corner-group. FRANCIS turns eagerly to LOUIS and his companions.*

As, at the feast, the minstrel chants
 High deeds of knighthood and of war,
 Of Charles the Emperor, and sweet France,
 Ballad and gest and blithe romance, —
 Be ye our troubadours!

Tell us poor stay-at-homes that be,
 Of Saracens beyond the sea, —
 Desert and palm, and holy shrine;
 Of Acre, and of Palestine!

Yea, — all that won for thee this sign.

[*He leans across to LOUIS, to look at the crusader's emblem upon the king's habit.*

LOUIS unfastens it and leans towards him to show it. — The other knights do likewise with theirs, and the villagers cluster close.

LOUIS is clearly seen in profile, left, FRANCIS facing the spectators, in the centre of the group.

Enter, down left, — round the corner-wall of THE FURRIER'S house, the two thieves,

568 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

GRILLO and VECCHIO VECCHIO, *unnoticed by the crowd.*

They look upon this gathering with open-mouthed surprise, soon spying LOUIS.

GRILLO

[*hoarsely*]

It's himself, in spite of all; — the man of France. Mark you that nose?

VECCHIO VECCHIO

What game are they at? . . . They've borne off the food.

GRILLO

[*still staring*]

It's his nose.

VECCHIO VECCHIO

And what good is his nose to me? Do you see the miniver up his sleeve?

GRILLO

That nose . . . I saw it on horseback . . . I can't miss it afoot. Look! . . .

[*They whisper*]

[THE WOLF, *to the right, sniffs warily high in air, then looks about for the cause of his unrest.*

THE WOLF

[*apart*]

That scent? . . . It can't be . . . *Wf!*

[*He follows his scent, left, and perceives*

GRILLO and VECCHIO VECCHIO. *At the same moment they see him.*

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Death of my life! —

GRILLO

No, no, —

THE WOLF

[*ominously*]

Gr-r-r-r

[*People turn to look at GRILLO and VECCHIO*

VECCHIO, *who are struggling to join the circle for protection.*

VECCHIO VECCHIO and GRILLO

Gentlemen, lords — . . . No — no matter,

—— We are . . . we are very fond of dogs!

—— I like dogs . . . Dogs like me.

570 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE WOLF

[*ferociously*]

SGUARDA!

GRILLO

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO!

[*They rush out, mad with fright. — General uproar. — The villagers spring up and shout, buddled together. — LOUIS rises and his men stand by him.*]

FRANCIS *lifts his hand for quiet, and crosses to THE WOLF.*

WOMEN

[*screaming*]

Father, it's the devil himself — Seeking to undo you! —

Ah, *Lupone, Rubaccio!* — Beast! Beast!

MEN

Kill him — kill him — kill him! No, it's a dog — No, it's a Wolf — A dog — a Wolf — the Wolf of Gubbio, — the Wolf of Gubbio!

FRANCIS

Peace!

ALL THE PEOPLE

'T was he emptied the pot! — He stole the broth. — I saw him — I heard him — I knew it. The simple brother left him alone with the pot. 'T was he ate up our feast of a year! 'T was he ate our chickens and sheep these years gone by! — No, no, it 's a dog! — The devil's own dog! —

— Look you! How ashamed he is already! Even as a dog he is telling you, — he did it!

[THE WOLF goes *abjectly prostrate at the feet of FRANCIS*. — *The people pick up stones.*

FRANCIS

Hush. Little children, will you grieve

The heart of God? — This eve?

Your brother has confessed.

. He is your guest.

Heavy indeed his debt to you, and sore.

— Forgive the more.

[*Murmurs*]

There is no need to tell: you know.

This is . . . the Wolf of Gubbio.

[*Renewed rage and fear*]

572 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

And all these years, and all these years,
He wrought you havoc, hunger, tears ;
He filled the dark with fears.
Yet this one day, — from his safe wood,
He came to crave your brotherhood,
 If ye but understood.
The dog that served so faithfully
This hour gone by, was none but he.
... I was the sinner, — I,
 To leave him lone —

ALL

 No, . . . he must die!
He must die! — With a stake through his heart!
— Kill — kill — kill him !

FRANCIS

Hark ! . . . Know you not, on this high feast,
There is a truce, 'twixt man and beast ?
 — Ye may not touch the least
Of brother creatures vengefully ; —
Nor hurt, nor hound him that he die. —
That pact between you, ye shall keep :
Unless you will Lord Christ to weep,
. . . . Even Lord Love, on high !

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 573

My little wolves . . . fear not! Let cease
Your anger, save it be with me.
And Brother Wolf shall go in peace.

*[Murmurs die out, and spring up. The people
are backing away fearfully, when THE
DYER'S WIFE stumbles against one of the
French knights and screams.]*

THE DYER'S WIFE

Ah, ah! . . . Look there, too! If he have
not a sword under the robe of a holy palmer!
What pilgrims are these! What holiday for
poor folks! —

LOUIS

[to FRANCIS, reassuring all]

Yea, brother, think no ill; — 't is no disguise.
Only of wont, my men are armed with swords,
To do you service; seeing we are indeed
All fellow-pilgrims . . . from the Holy Land.
And I . . .

[He hesitates, then says with meaning]

. . . thy Brother Louis . . . Louis of France.

PEOPLE

— Eh, it is a great lord then, . . . —
A mighty baron —! —

FRANCIS

*[not knowing him, but with simplest blithe
courtesy]*

And welcome, Brother Louis, from sweet
France!

LOUIS

Happily come . . . to beg all ye, good friends,
[To the people]

Be guests of mine; and suffer me, me too,
To bear a candle at your festival.

JUNIPER

[approaching timidly]

My lord Sir Pilgrim . . .

LOUIS

Brother Juniper?

Tell me, what can I, or these gentlemen
To speed the holy feast?

JUNIPER

[in a breathless outburst]

Ah, lords and barons, and Sir Brother
Knight! Your gentlemen, there it is! — If they
might but search the woods now, — before sun-

down; nay, 't is well-nigh on us . . . but with torches! Sure, any lost soul would follow a torch! — And if they could but find and bring and save, the good man, and the lost babe, of this poor soul yonder in the ox-shed! . . . She that is to figure to us this night, Madonna Queen of Heaven, with that crib, and that hay, and the ox, and the ass, and the manger! — For except we find and bring her man to be Holy Joseph, and her babe to be a babe indeed, — the Blessed Babe, — there will be nothing left us for a spectacle, but a sorry, rueful, out-of-measure poor little fragment of a Holy Family!

LOUIS

[*warmly*]

Blest be thy heart, my Brother. We'll make search!

FRANCIS

Take comfort, Juniper.

CHILDREN

To-night! —

To-night!

FRANCIS

— With every man his light!

[They all withdraw, taking the longest way round from THE WOLF, with reviving sullen murmurs. FRANCIS points to THE WOLF, solemnly.]

And keep the pact of his release.

[To THE WOLF]

. . . . My Brother, go in peace.

[They go into their houses and bar the doors. Exeunt LOUIS and his men by the steps. LEO and JUNIPER up, wait for FRANCIS, who lingers beside THE WOLF.]

THE FURRIER'S WIFE *calls from her window shrilly.*

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

Father, a wolf's a wolf! — Don't trust him. A beast is n't a man, and never will be. A wolf will never put on human ways! — No, never, never!

FRANCIS

[smiling]

Ah, . . . but yes

— When men put off their wolfishness.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 577

[The light wanes ; with the quickness of sunset in a mountain place. — There is a sound of bolts drawn and doors barred. THE WOLF is still silent and prostrate.

FRANCIS

Brother, and is thy hurt so sore?

THE WOLF

[muttering]

‘Wolf-at-the-door’ . . .

FRANCIS

Nay, go in peace. And comfort thee ;

. . . Behold, thou ’rt free.

[He points up, and with a slow caress on THE WOLF’S head, he goes out under the archway with LEO and JUNIPER. THE WOLF gets up from the ground and looks miserably, with hanging head, at the shut houses, right and left ; then shambles heavily up the square, pausing midway.

THE WOLF

Yet have I not deserved to be

Their by-word name for Misery.

Men cast their wolfishness on me !

[*Snarlingly*]

Big wolves and little, — hutch and hall,
 Raven upon each other, all : —
 Each on the lesser, — day by day,
 They snatch and cheat and rend their prey;
 Warring together, great and small ; —
 . . . Yes, warring all ! —
 The very bread they struggled for,
 They spill and waste in war — war
 War ! . . .

[*Going up, and with his paws on the steps,
 he turns to look back on the square.*]

That day, when I would gather more
 Of ravening greed, and wolfish lore,
 I will seek out the homes of Men ;
 I will seek out their feasts again. —
 Let them cry aloud, and call me, then,
 ‘*Wolf-at-the-Door . . .*

Wolf-at-the-Door !

. *Wolf-at-the-Door !*

Curtain.

ACT III

SCENE: *The same square at dusk. Above the arch, the glimpse of sky glows peacock-blue; with the Evening Star.*

The archway is now filled in with a hanging composed of various stuffs and garments, — deep green, blue and olive, fastened together to make a curtain. At the left-hand edge of this home-made curtain, a crack of light gleams upon a string of children, one behind another who are peering in. — The only other light comes from the faintly glimmering shrine, in the corner-wall, which makes a tiny lunette of dim color.

Down to the right, by THE POTTER'S bench, THE WOLF watches, motionless and miserable.

BIMBA, *giving place to another child for a moment at the peep-hole, turns about dancingly, singing.*

BIMBA

STAR, Star!
Star, Star!

580 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

OTHER CHILDREN

[singing in little high voices]

Star, Star!

Star, Star!

BIMBA

[peeping in]

Look, look! Who'd ever guess it was the woman of Foligno? She looks all shining, like Our Lady.

[They press together, to see]

BIMBO

But she's been weeping, too; you can see.

BIMBA

You can see her tears . . . shining in the torchlight.

CHILDREN

[singing]

Star, Star,

Star, Star!

Star, Star!

[The sound of a song in the distance attracts their attention for an instant.]

MEN'S VOICES

[*without*]

The Lord of highest Heaven,
Fair Lord Emmanuel,
Shall come at last, this even,
With famished men to dwell!

My heart, be as a bell,

Noël, Noël!

And call unto the calling stars,

'All's well! All's well!'

Noël, Noël, Noël!

THE WOLF

[*wretchedly, to himself*]

The world goes by,
The world goes by;
The stars smile down,
And then pass by.

[*Looking up*]

The great Star shines, and will not see.
The small stars prick me with their scorn.
Each look is sharper than a thorn . . .
Love is for every soul but me.

BIMBO

[peering behind the archway curtain]

Look at the Ox, . . . Nicolo's Ox! . . .
They are going to lead him out . . . Oh! . Oh!

BIMBA

Now she cannot weep any more.

BIMBO

His horns are as wide as the moon!

BIMBA

Wider than the moon: . . . wider than the moon! And his eyes are as big as the doorway; and his coat is as white as the snow! Oh, Nicolo's Ox was never so beautiful before, — never, never so beautiful!

THE WOLF

The Ox!

[With unquenchable curiosity he creeps nearer, lagging with jealous pain. He goes into THE POTTER'S empty house, and tries the window, comes out restlessly, goes to LUCREZIA'S house, and thrusts the door open, coming out to listen to the sing-song of the CHILDREN.]

BIMBO

She ought to be content now, with everybody treating her like the Queen of Heaven.

BIMBA

But it's only for to-night. To-morrow she'll be just like anybody else, and as if it were last Monday; . and it's not back to Heaven she will be going, but only to Foligno. . . . Besides, you see, she wants her baby, — her own one!

[THE WOLF drops his nose wretchedly, takes his paws from the sill, and shambles out with increasing dog-like anguish. He squeezes behind the stone bench along the house, and rests his nose on top of it, still watching. The Song approaches, — sung by the King's men, off.

MEN'S VOICES

The stars that be God's liegemen
 Along His towers on high,
 They lift aloft their torches
 To light the dark hosts by.
 Men, each and all, let cry,
Noël, Noël!

Call to the stars above our wars,

‘ All ’s well ! All ’s well ! ’

Noël, Noël, Noël !

[BIMBO scampers up the steps after the sound]

BIMBA

It’s the French knights, coming from the mountain ! — They’ve found him, — they’ve found him, — they’ve found her man !

[*Reënter BIMBO, from above*]

BIMBO

The man, the man, the man, they’ve found him ! They’ve bound him up, they’ve put a fine coat on him ! . . . He’s coming to be Holy Joseph, — standing by the Manger.

CHILDREN

[*ecstatically*]

Holy Joseph, standing by the Manger !

[*The tent-curtains part, and ASSUNTA is seen to look out with agonized hope. Enter, above, three men with torches, conducting GIUSEPPE, a dark and comely peasant, wrapped in a borrowed cloak, with his arm in a sling. ASSUNTA steps out, letting the curtain fall, and stretches out her arms.*]

GIUSEPPE

Assunta, Assunta! —

ASSUNTA

. *The Bambino?*

[They reach their arms to each other, each seeing that the other has it not.]

GIUSEPPE

Ah!

[They embrace each other, in stricken silence]

ASSUNTA

[pointing in]

One there . . . has hope . . .

GIUSEPPE

Hope? . . . Ah . . .

ASSUNTA

. . . The Poverello!

[They go in despairingly. THE WOLF cowers and listens.]

BIMBA

[to BIMBO, coming down]

Oh . . . do you . . . suppose . . . ?

BIMBO

[defiantly]

Nobody knows.

BIMBA

[*weeping*]

But . . . if we'd never run away,

. To-day . . ?

She called, — she did, . . . to tell us where
it lay!

BIMBO

[*sulkily*]And if six men can't find it, how could we
find it? We might have been stolen ourselves.

BIMBA

Oh! Oh! . . . What if the Wolf—

BIMBO

[*stoutly*]He would n't dare! — Would he ever put
his nose in Gubbio after that? Would n't he
be a dead Wolf now, if holy Francis had n't
made us promise? . . . Who'd keep it after
that? Come back . . . let's see what they're
doing now. — It's all dark here.

BIMBA

Every candle up above . . . going round
the Duomo. — All the people, — all the can-

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 587

dles, going along like little stars in the dark.
. . . And Grandmother made a great wax-
light; and she's going to let me hold it. Only
it must keep from now till the feast of the
three Kings! . . . Oh!

[*Discerning THE WOLF's head, and backing
up, fearfully, BIMBO after her.*

Oh, come, come — quick! — Stay close to
holy Francis!

BIMBO

He . . . he's asleep!

[*They scurry back to the curtain and the ab-
sorbed group, left.*

THE WOLF

I to live on, alone, apart,
Warming this pain in my old heart!
Still with the snows that melt and drip,
Gnawing my paws for fellowship!
Looking, far, on the lights below;
Little house-lights of Gubbio!
Deb! . . . Lasso! . . . Wff. . . .

[*The curtain parts slightly, and FRANCIS
steps out towards THE WOLF, who goes
haltingly to meet him.*

588 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

FRANCIS

Brother, and didst thou call? —

THE WOLF

[*buskily*]

Yea, so.

How should you know? . . .

I only wait one human sign,

After this life-long, aching fast

Of silence; one more word of thine! —

The last.

FRANCIS

The last?

THE WOLF

One word, one man-word spoken,

Before the midnight breaks your spell,

And God takes back His miracle, . . .

And truce is broken!

FRANCIS

Ah, Brother, this shall never be! —

That any love 'twixt thee and me

Be shattered. That were misery.

THE WOLF

[*suffering*]

Oh, if you knew,

You, too!

And what care I? —

Liefer I am at once to die,

Than feel slow fires of tortured pride;

Seeing Love is; — but I must bide

Forevermore outside!

[JUNIPER *enters hurriedly from behind the curtain*]

JUNIPER

Brother Francis, — Brother Francis, — the people will be coming now. Once around the Duomo they are going! [*Pointing above.*] And oh, Brother Francis, they will see a miracle this night; — they will hear praise from the Ox and the Ass! For the Ass is taking thought, with his eyes fixed on the torches; and the breath of the Ox goes up like incense, marvellous warm and white on the cold of the air! Let us watch for the miracle!

[FRANCIS *goes up, beckoning THE WOLF to stay. The CHILDREN cluster round JUNIPER and the curtain. THE WOLF withdraws slowly down.*]

590 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

CHILDREN

O Brother Juniper, O Brother Juniper!

BIMBA

Will he speak this night? Will the Ox speak? — So that we all can hear?

JUNIPER

Why not, little fledglings, why not? Since the Holy Night is drawing on; and only now he moved his great eyes towards me; and I heard with my heart as it were the sound of a bell! Have faith! Have patience. —

CHILDREN

What will the Ox say?

JUNIPER

Why, he will praise the Lord, surely. But whether with Hosanna or Our Father, I cannot tell.

[Bell sounds from the Duomo]

CHILDREN

Oh! Oh!

[Some scamper up the steps to join the procession above. A few remain with their noses at the crack of light.]

THE WOLF

[looking up towards the bell]

Yea, and I hear! Oh, rarely well

You wove the spell . . .

Beckoning voice far-off, Bell!

[The bell sounds]

Warm, and softly, you led below,

Here, to the men of Gubbio!—

Out of that lone and listening wood,

Dreaming a dream of brotherhood!—

[Bitterly]

Hush;—wait; you shall sound my knell.

Only a little!—I come again.—

Only a few sands more, and then . . .

[Bell]

Farewell! *[He runs out, wildly, right.]*

[Enter down, also from the right, the two thieves, VECCHIO VECCHIO and GRILLO, puzzled at the changed aspect of the square, by reason of the blocked archway.]

VECCHIO VECCHIO

What's towards, now? This is the maddest lunatic town I ever fell on!—

GRILLO

Will you see that? Where is the gateway gone? Were we not here? Or have we rounded on ourselves?

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Per Bacco! Thou 'rt besotted. This is the place; the very place where we sat waiting for them to set on the food. Look you, the same. The archway there is blocked with some holiday show.

GRILLO

An ever I am able to tell east from west again,—or right from left, or a wolf from a man! We were fools to take to our heels. But when I saw the old devil there, rearing and bristling, even as this morning on the mountain . . . [*Shivers.*] . . . I see wolves everywhere!

VECCHIO VECCHIO

[*laughing feebly*]

Thou 'lt be telling it was a Wolf we passed now in the dark . . . running possesst through the brambles,—in too much haste to eat us! . . . But if it had been the Wolf indeed,—

he were slain and skinned by this, and his ears nailed up on the gate — !

[They inspect the house fronts]

GRILLO

[rallying]

Thou 'rt right, Old Cheese ! 'Tis the place, and the arch, and the lower square, of the lordly city of Gubbio. — *[Pointing.]* Duomo ; — fountain ; — tanner's, — by the breath of this byway !

VECCHIO VECCHIO

[pointing]

And by this master show . . . What if . . .

[Approaching THE FURRIER'S]

GRILLO

No, no, show me first what's back of yon gallimaufry curtain. Show me first where lies the man of France !

[They tiptoe towards the curtain]

VECCHIO VECCHIO

Oho ! And this is the day when friars feast. Wine flowing freely ; and some noble show set forth, not without noble gazers, unannounced.

[*Speaking back to GRILLO*]

‘*Follow me on!*’ . . . Then, lordings, by
your leaves,

— An if it please you

[*Enter from the archway, FRANCIS, his eyes
full, smiling on the two, without surprise.*

FRANCIS

Welcome, . . . Brother Thieves!

[*They stand rooted to the earth,—robbed
of their breath,—like creatures at bay.*
FRANCIS *lets the curtain fall behind him,
and steps out into the dusk towards them,
encouragingly, shading his eyes a moment,
the better to see. He speaks with friend-
liest cheer.*

Nay, beseech you, do not go.

So the torch-light dazzled me,

. . . Hardly might I know.

Yea, but now, in verity,

Seeing it is none but ye,

Brothers, of your courtesy,

Do not go.

I will not, Brothers, that ye be

Such castaways of misery,—

And your lives in jeopardy,

. . . Men under ban :—

Nay, but each one a joyful man.

Come in, come hither, and in God's name,
Suffer ye now no blame.

*[Their faces are convulsed with doubt,
amazement, irony.]*

But take your comfort, and draw near,

. . . Without hurt or fear.

Warm your hearts against this sight!—

Since our Lord is host to-night.

—I will be your warranty,

Men shall do you right.

*[They come down slowly as if they were un-
able to walk. FRANCIS goes up the steps
to meet the procession.]*

GRILLO

[wanly trying to chuckle]

‘Such misery!’

[His face is twisted with want.]

VECCHIO VECCHIO

[dully]

‘Hurt or fear!’ But it was he . . .

596 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

GRILLO

It was he . . . the same. It was he of the woods this morning . . . a little thin fellow.

[Twitching his fingers as if he remembered his clutch of ST. FRANCIS' shoulder.]

. . . I am stark madman now, I know.

VECCHIO VECCHIO

[as the voices approach]

We durst not stay. . . .

GRILLO

. . . . We durst not go!

[The procession comes down the steps led by two Pifferari; the French knights singing, with LOUIS; then the women; then the men; all with candles; FRANCIS and FRA LEO falling in last. GRILLO and VECCHIO VECCHIO withdraw, down to the left, clearly not daring to run away; and watch all that happens, surprised into open-mouthed subjection.]

THE KNIGHTS

Now fair lord Gabriel speed us
Who march not forth to war;

But seeking out that little Child
And following on the Star !
All we His liegemen are ; —

Noël, Noël ! —

Both shepherd-folk and men of might,
And kings that come from far !

Noël, Noël, Noël !

[As they range themselves by the upper arcades expectantly, right and left, FRANCIS stands forth before the curtain.

FRANCIS

Welcome, beloved ! Welcome ye
All met in one glad company ;
Each one a singing and a light
To praise the holy night ! —
Like little sorry stars we are,
And dim and small and late and far,
That follow the one Star.
But yet one treasure do we bring,
As liegeman to their king : —
Love, love, down-showered, — and love
 outpoured
Over the world, on every thing,
From Love that is sole lord.

[With the radiance of a child]

O heart ! thou little rueful cup,
 Fill thee brimful ; be lifted up !
 O heart, — thou little cup of earth,
 What should be likened to thy mirth
 Or to the radiancy thereof,

So thou wert filled with Love ?
 No heart so dark nor so forlorn
 That, if it were fulfilled of Love,
 The star that most exults above,
 Could laugh his gift to scorn.
 But then indeed the stars shall sing
 With men, for glory of one thing : —
 When that True Love is born.

CHILDREN

*Star, Star,
 Star, Star ! . . .*

FRANCIS

Ah, dearest ones, there is one word to tell.
 Where Love is not, can be no miracle : —
 Where Love is, . . . All is well !

THE PEOPLE

Noël, Noël !

FRANCIS

[*at the curtain*]

Now, Love Himself shall be our Host;
And not in castle nor in hall,
But yonder, in a stall . . .
Even as an outcast stranger,
Fain to be homeless with the uttermost.

Behold, . . . the Manger!

[*LEO and JUNIPER draw back the curtains. Torch-light turns the archway to a golden lunette, with its Holy Family. ASSUNTA robed as the Virgin leans above an empty manger; GIUSEPPE, grave and comely, as ST. JOSEPH, with a crook;—at back the great white Ox, behind a bin of hay, and the Ass beside. The background is filled with hangings and greenery. The people are struck with awe and delight.*]

GRILLO

[*down to VECCHIO VECCHIO*]

Are we living or dead?

VECCHIO VECCHIO

If we be dead, then this is Judgment.

600 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

GRILLO

[*in a whisper*]

Nay, it is the town of Gubbio . . . and the man yon, . . . is the man . . . on the cliff . . .

VECCHIO VECCHIO

And She is . . .

GRILLO

The woman of Foligno. . . .

[*At the close of the Noë! above, THE WOLF has reappeared aown by THE POTTER'S wall, breathless, burrs and brambles in his coat and ears. He looks and retreats; reappears in the open doorway of OLD LUCREZIA'S house, and watches there awhile. He is panting, and evidently in extremity of wretchedness. No one sees him; all are rapt in the welcome of ST. FRANCIS. BIMBO and BIMBA explain all to OLD LUCREZIA, who listens with beatific pleasure.*

BIMBA

—And Blessed Mary the Virgin, — and Holy Joseph, and the Manger !

BIMBO

— And Joseph has a crook.

BIMBA

— And Mary has a veil. And the Ox and the Ass are there !

BIMBO

And torches, — lights in every place !

LUCREZIA

I feel them shining . . . on my face.

FRANCIS

Come then, beloved, and draw near ;
Let us make offering here.
For we, that be not great nor wise,
Shall we not gladden our poor eyes,
Even to the last and least,
Like wise men from the East ? —
Yea, surely ! Could we see indeed
Our Lady in her hour of need ;
The Blessed Mother, glorified,
Above this cradle-side,
Would not our hearts receive their sight,
And we go glad this night ?

Ah, dearest, could we but have known
 The days Love came unto His own!—
 His one reproach no more but this,—
 ‘Thou gavest Me no kiss.’

[*He turns towards ASSUNTA*]

Bring we our treasure, and no less.
 So shall it be that for her cold
 And want, and sorrow, sevenfold,
 She shall have more than heart can hold
 Of blessedness.

Love make our offerings to her,
 Gold, and frankincense and myrrh!

[*He beckons first to the CHILDREN, who
 go up one by one, with their gifts, BIMBO
 and BIMBA speaking, the others dumbly
 following; all watched with rapt interest
 by the neighbors craning their necks.*]

BIMBO

I have a cricket here for mine!
 I caught it, last Ascension Day;
 And I gave it grass, and drops of wine.—
 And when it rubs its wings
 Together,—then it sings!
 And I made this cage for him, out of rushes;
 And it's just like our thrush's! . . .

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 603

Holy Bambino'll love to play
With that in heaven, some day !
[ASSUNTA receives it, smiling faintly]

BIMBA

[*offering her plaited basket*]

O holy Francis, — I mean . . . O Blessed
Mother !

That boy was Bimbo . . . and I'm just the
other.

This one I made, Madonna, this one here !

And I began it long ago, — last year.

And Granddam made it too, at harvest-moon ;

But I finished it again, this afternoon.

[*The other children follow, proffering their
gifts.*]

*The Brothers tie white goose-wings to the
shoulders of BIMBO and BIMBA, who beam
with pride in their angelhood. Their grand-
mother explains to OLD LUCREZIA.*

THE DYER'S WIFE

— The finest white goose feathers !

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

— Fine, I vow !

THE DYER

— My boy Gentile ought to see them now!

[LUCIA advances first of the maidens, with a bright scarf.]

BIMBO

[calling out]

Take care it's nice, Lucia, what you bring!

We're angels now; — we can see everything!

LUCIA

[humbly to ASSUNTA]

Lady, this kerchief for your neck, . . .

The best I have. — It is not worn at all.

Saving it was I, for the festival

Of the three Kings. . . .

The best of all my things.

Lady, I pray you, wear it, to make fine.

OTHER GIRLS

— And mine!

— And mine!

— And mine!

[They flock towards ASSUNTA, and touched with new awe as they approach, offer their ribbons and withdraw softly.]

LUCREZIA

[listening with smiling blindness]

And is it our maidens? — What are they doing,
Softly as doves? . . . All feathers, . . . all coo-
ing!

*[Beckoned by FRANCIS, THE BAKER hobbles
up on his cane, with a loaf under each
arm and a bulging pocket. There is the
same homely warmth with the gift, and
awe at the group before him, as he ex-
plains his offering.]*

THE BAKER

Lady, Madonna, . . . think no scorn ;
I kneaded and baked since I was born. —
Milk-white loaves, and both for you. . . .

[Fumbling in his pockets]

Something for Holy Joseph, too. —
Eggs of the silk-worm ! 'There's a beginning :—
Once ye have them hatched and spinning,
Each of them in his own cocoon, —
Eh, — eh ? Ye know ? — Ye can learn all soon.

*[Starts to go and turns back, feeling in the
other pocket.]*

Ehi, I am old in the wits, look you !
Here are three slips of mulberry, too ;

606 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

Ripe to set. — If ye had no more,
'T would help to keep the wolf from the door!
Blessing and Hail! — And so, farewell;—
Go safe, with glorious Gabriel!

THE DYER'S WIFE

[*to* LUCREZIA]

Listen to him!

LUCREZIA

[*laughing with pleasure*]

Old neighbor,—you? . . .

And his voice all shining over with dew!

[FRANCIS *beckons to* THE POTTER, *who*
wipes his forehead and approaches with
his gift; looking about, awe-struck, on the
Manger and the group.

THE POTTER

[*crossing himself*]

Was it like this? Was it like this?

Hay in the stable? . . . Lady of Bliss!

[*Humbly offers his bowl, holding it up also*
for JOSEPH's inspection.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 607

Madonna, 't is a little bowl ;
Yet masterly made, and whole.
Look you, and it is lipped both ways ;—
One side for hunger ; one for praise.
Good measure it will hold !
Eh? . . .
I would not have it scrawled and scrolled ;
The very way — [*Checking himself.*]
No, no, . . . look here,
Burnished and bright, and fountain-clear,
My ruddy glaze ! [*Polishing it with his sleeve.*]
And, woman dear,
[*Fumbling in his cloak for a small bowl*]
For Him . . . and in His name, ye wit,
[*Pointing to the Manger*]
A little fine one, like to it ;
If he be found again . . . Ah, well !
Misericordia ! Who can tell ?
[*ASSUNTA is agitated*]
Holy Joseph . . . I wish ye well.

THE DYER

[*to his wife*]

Now you, Giannina, you can speak for two.

608 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

HIS WIFE

No, you go first. No, I will, and then you!

[*They go up together, towards ASSUNTA*]

Madam, I . . . here! [*Presenting her linen.*

. . . I wove it with these hands ;

As any one can see that understands.

And it's fair linen, one can tell, — the best ;

And from the finest flax I ever dressed !

And here's the border, and it's all for you.

THE DYER

[*with his offering*]

— And this one, too . . .

HIS WIFE

Dyed with the purest saffron !

THE DYER

— Precious blue !

THE WIFE

The goodliest color . . .

THE DYER

— Ay, the blue's our pride.

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 609

HIS WIFE

There's but a little left, of all inside —

And it will last you fourscore years and ten!

*[She chokes with human emotion at sight of
the empty Manger;—so does THE DYER,
as they turn away.]*

. And then —

THE DYER

. And then,

You'll hand it down. —

HIS WIFE

— 'T will last you all your life!

[She vainly tries to keep him from speaking]

THE DYER

— Yes, iron-strong, each one . . .

And you will hand them down, unto your son.—

Well, well, if not your son then, to his wife!

[She leads him away]

What ails thee, woman?

HIS WIFE

[weeping]

. Oh!

610 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

THE DYER

. Whatever's at her?
Spilling out tears and chatter?

HIS WIFE

Thou blundering man — '*Hand down*' — Oh!
Oh!
The babe, that will be perished in the snow!

THE WOLF

[*with a moan from his covert*]

Deb, — Guai, Guai!

[VECCHIO VECCHIO and GRILLO, *still cowed,*
look across at THE WOLF, while others
follow THE DYER and HIS WIFE with
their homely offerings.

GRILLO

— What? —

VECCHIO VECCHIO

'T is a dog.

GRILLO

No; 't is the same . . .
The Wolf, — I care not. — [*Dully.*]

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 611

VECCHIO VECCHIO

. Spent, or lame,
He is; none heeds him. Look you, — tame!

GRILLO

Ay, it is he . . . And he is sad,
Even as a man; or charmed, . . or mad.

[THE FURRIER *and* HIS WIFE *step forward with beaming satisfaction.*

THE FURRIER

Madonna Virgin — [*To his wife.*] Nay, let me!

HIS WIFE

Man, hold it up, so all can see.

THE FURRIER

Ecco! —

[*Displaying a large fur hood with many tails*]

NEIGHBORS

— Ah! ah! —

But that is rare!

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

. There!
Wrought with most cunning . . .

THE FURRIER

. . . Finest vair!

Eh? Parti-colored, — out and in;
Matched of the softest squirrel-skin.

HIS WIFE

— And set about with all these tails!

THE FURRIER

Soft as the breath of nightingales . . .
Soft as a new-born . . .

HIS WIFE

. Nay now, . . . hush!

THE FURRIER

[*looking at the Manger*]

Soft as a thrush!
And, Lady, look you . . . if you should
Find him again, but if you could—

HIS WIFE

— Nay, 't is too large for that, this hood!
[*Leading him back; he turns and calls over
his shoulder.*]

THE FURRIER

But if he be lost, as they have said,—
Why, ye might sell it then, instead !

THE DYER'S WIFE

[*aside*]

Ah, furs will never warm the dead.

[FRANCIS comes down himself, and leads
OLD LUCREZIA tenderly, towards the
Manger. She seems to feel her way by the
warmth and light, and reaches her arms out,
her face filled with beatitude.

LUCREZIA

Look down, Madonna. — If it be
Thy will to make an old heart glad,
Shine upon me. . . .
Beautiful sons I had ;
Beautiful daughters. — All are gone ;
And the daylight, that shone.
Ay, all their sweetness, it is cold . . .
And I am very old.
But this I take my comfort in,
Madonna, where I sit and spin ;
Dreaming I ever make
White things, for thy dear sake . . .

614 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

And for thy blessed Son . . .

[*Offering a little garment blindly*]

See, Lady, it is done.

[*She approaches the Manger and touches the edge.*]

And was it so, the Holiest lay?

Even as a lamb, among the hay?

FRANCIS

Yea, Mother, even so.

LUCREZIA

Ah, could I only touch, and know!

Ah, she will think no scorn,

If I but feel, who never saw, —

How warm He lay, the Babe new-born,

Warm bowered in the straw! . . .

[*She gropes, with a worshipping face, about the Manger. Suddenly her face clouds with pain. ASSUNTA and GIUSEPPE are shaken with irrepressible grief.*]

Ah! — It is empty.

[ASSUNTA weeps.]

FRANCIS

[*soothingly*]

. Till we find

That which is lost. Nay, —

LUCREZIA

. I am blind!

BIMBO *and* BIMBA

— Madonna's weeping!

OTHERS

[*dismayed*]

Weeping! Oh,

What an ill omen!

FRANCIS

. Nay, not so.

The tears of this Our Lady here

Shall haply wash our poor eyes clear.

Only her holy grief, maybe,

Could make us see!

For had we cherished, yesterday,

These two that fared their lonely way, —

Had we but kept this Mother here,

Even as Our Lady dear, —

Nor sent her, as a scattered leaf,

Not caring whitherward, nor how, —

We should not stand all shamefast now,

Before her grief.

616 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

But she who hath, for some high grace,
Madonna's tears upon her face, —
Even to us who wrought her pain,
Will she not give us wondrously,
Out of Our Lady's treasury
Pardon and peace, again ?

[ASSUNTA *recovers herself and looks up, smiling*; GIUSEPPE *strokes her shoulder, and looks up likewise.*

THE DYER'S WIFE

Ay now, he says it and it's true, too !

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

And some of it for me and you too !
For if we'd kept them here that day
When Nicolo sent them all away
So they were robbed in the woods there, maybe—

THE DYER'S WIFE

They would never have lost their baby !

THE BAKER

— Then we'd have had the Holy Bambino !
Nicolo's fault. —

LUCIA

But how could he know? —

[NICOLO *bears and protests. The murmur springs up, while others are passing before the Manger.*

LUCIA

[*To THE DYER'S WIFE*]

Look at your two little angels there,
In the goose-wings they're fit to wear!
— Were they not telling they heard a cry?

THE FURRIER

— Did ever they search for the babe, put by?

THE FURRIER'S WIFE

— Search? Not they! Would they try to
find —

LUCIA

— Running with never a look behind!

THE DYER'S WIFE

Say as you will . . . From last to first,
We're all but sinners.

LUCIA

. We're not the worst!
 Who would call it a mortal sin,
 To clear out all comers, out of the Inn? —
 Were we not told, to take and prepare
 And make all ready and fine and fair,
 And empty and splendid for these French
 knights? —
 And a great lord with them, that none did
 know,
 Coming to lodge in Gubbio,
 And to see the sights? —
 And if they never had come then, maybe
 Those two wouldn't have lost the baby!

THE POTTER

[*piping up again*]

Then we'd have had the Holy Bambino!
 — Nicolo's fault!

NICOLO *and* LUCIA

[*at bay*]

. But how could we know?

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 619

JUNIPER

*[who has been paying his homage to the group, and
ever watching the live-stock with expectancy;
he points to the Ox]*

See, Brother Francis, how he looks and hears! —
And Brother little Ass . . . he turns his ears.
Will they not speak?
To comfort this our Lady, for the tears
Upon her cheek?

CHILDREN

Oh, will he speak? Oh, will he speak?

NICOLO

[desperately]

No! No! — He will not speak! Father Francis, sweet little father Francis, — God forbid that my Ox should turn and speak! Miracles, miracles enough, can there not be? — with sheep and birds and little fishes? — but that mine Ox should turn out to be no Ox at all? — Whatever could I do now, if he spoke? — Me walking after him at the plough, and he talking back to me! . . . What would he be saying to me? — What would he be saying? — What good would it do, what good would it

do any man here if he spoke? — What would my shame be, ever after, — putting him under the yoke?

NEIGHBORS

What 's happened to Nicolo? Is he singing?

NICOLO

[*irately*]

Singing! — *I?* — It 's the simple truth I am telling you. Say no more, blessed Francis, — Brother Juniper! You have not to say a word. — And listen, Our Lady, turn not aside. —
 Listen, ah, do not frown!

[*Moved at himself*]

Listen, Madonna, — Oh, Holy Child! —

. . . My heart is upside-down.
 For was I not saving the space, now?
 And were we not all to give place, now? —
 Stable and inn, — and bed and board
 For these noble men coming from France, —
 Ay, and their lord?
 Now hearken you two, — and hearken all! —
 You shall take of the goodliest of my stall;
 To be your comfort and your stay; —

[*Nigh weeping*]

Finer there is not, no, palfrey nor pony !
 Take, and take home, — and ride him away : —
 Pantaleone ! *[Pointing to the Ass.*
 Pantaleone, — my donkey there ;
[The people stirred to enthusiasm]
 So mild, and nimble, and sage and fair ;
 Yes, and his bridle too, beside ; —
 Ah, what will you ? — Now you shall ride
 As the Holy Ones fled into Egypt, they say
 and they sing, —
 From Herod the King !

NEIGHBORS

Bravo ! Bravo ! Bravo Nicolo ! —

— Not that a donkey is as good as a child,
 but a fine donkey it is, too ! — Ah, *Evviva*
 Pantaleone !

*[LOUIS advances with a golden casket in his
 hands.*

LOUIS

My fellow-pilgrims, ye have heard
 Nicolo's word.

How all mischances here that be,
 Befell . . . because of me :

Unwitting how my too much state
 Would dispossess the desolate.

Lady, I have no gift to bring
Worthy the most high King.
Well do I see, in gold too late,
There is no kind of mirth. —
It is no more but yellow earth.
Yet, tho' I may not see thy tears consoled,
Yet, I beseech thee take
This offering for Love's sake,
Not weighed in gold.

[*She bears with grave sweetness; the people murmur, and stretch their necks to see.*]

THE PEOPLE

— Look, look, his offering!
— It might be from a King,
— What is it? —
— What but gold?
— She weeps!
— And yet, 't is gold.
— Ah, who could be consoled? —

THE WOLF

[*moaning apart*]

Deb! Lasso,— Guai,— Guai!

[THE KING *and his men withdraw*; ASSUNTA is clearly seen, looking out with wide eyes of grief above the gold casket, motionless.

THE DYER'S WIFE

— Ah, how could she forget?

THE BAKER

[*pityingly*]

— Madonna's weeping yet.

[GRILLO *starts toward the Manger as one in a trance. VECCHIO VECCHIO seeks to stay him, then falls back, under the same spell.*

GRILLO

[*vacantly*]

Madonna . . . I know not . . . what to say.

[ASSUNTA *looks at him; and her eyes widen as she recognizes him. GIUSEPPE lifts his head too, and his face grows tense; both are rigid, with the awe of their sacred characters struggling against human pain.*

GRILLO *speaks as a broken man, but younger.*

I was . . . a farer by this way, —

. . . Only to-day.

Madonna . . . look you, I have sinned.

This cloak . . . that warmed you from the wind, —

[*Holding it up*]

It was for want, and bitter lack.

I give it back. . . .

[He turns and comes down. BROTHER LEO receives it for her.]

VECCHIO VECCHIO *approaches, in the same manner, as a man who does not care further what becomes of him; the people amazed all into silence.*

VECCHIO VECCHIO

[restoring the wallet and the silver image]

Lady, . . . I pray this grace of you;

And Holy Joseph's pardon, too.

Lady, we could not well suppose . . .

But this is truth, God knows! —

[Backs away, held by the eyes of ASSUNTA and GIUSEPPE, both trembling and pale.]

FRANCIS

Yea, she that wears in our dim sight,

Our Lady's halo, for to-night, —

Will she not see with mother-eyes,

And fold us all, — all mother-wise,

In the pitying glory of her light?

[ASSUNTA, without turning her head, slowly crosses her arms upon her bosom and smiles]

*through her tears. GIUSEPPE's face clears
into strong beauty. They stand rapt.*

LEO and JUNIPER, *each with a green branch,
approach the Manger, and look on it with
such joy and devotion, that the CHILDREN
stretch up to see.*

BIMBA

[calling]

O Brother Juniper? What do you see?—
Is the Christ Child there?

JUNIPER

*[laying down his greenery with awe, almost
whispering]*

. But it may be!

*[Last, FRANCIS, with illumined face, goes up
to the Manger, and stretches his arms out
over it with rapturous tenderness;—as if
it were to him a bird's nest rather than
an altar.*

FRANCIS

O, Nest!

Nest of all heart's desire!

626 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

Even to thee the blinded birds go seeking;
 Nest of all Love!
 O empty Nest, —
 Be filled, be filled with these, —
 The wayworn sorrows, thronging, weeping,
 thronging, —
 The lost compassions, yea, the lack and longing
 Without hearts-ease!
 Nest that nor man nor bird did ever build,
 Be filled, be filled,
 Over, — above —
 All our sore longing,
 All our blind weeping, —
 Hopeless of rest;
 O Nest of the Light of the World!
 Thou Nest.

THE PEOPLE

Noël, Noël!

FRANCIS

 Nay, hark!
 What heavy heart is yonder in the dark?
 [*Shading his eyes, he steps down, looking to-*
 wards THE WOLF.]
 Lo, Brother Wolf!

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 627

THE PEOPLE

[*looking for THE WOLF who is half hiding by the
arcade of LUCREZIA'S house*]

—The Wolf, the Wolf?

. Then he did not go?

—What, was it he then, moaning so?

—Look, is he hurt? He limps,

. No, No!

THE WOLF

[*in a loud voice*]

Yes, it's The Wolf . . . of Gubbio!

[*Exclamations of amazement show that the
people have understood him to speak in
words.*]

THE PEOPLE

Look, listen!—Did you hear?—Did you hear? —The Wolf's talking.—The Wolf's speaking. Is it a dream?—No, No! Look there!

—The Wolf spoke out!—He spoke a word! We heard him all — we heard! We heard!

LUCREZIA

The miracle of the flocks and herds!

628 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

BIMBO *and* BIMBA

The Wolf is talking words !

ALL

— *The Wolf is talking words !*

FRANCIS

Ah, Brother Wolf, thy heart was sore ; —
We should have welcomed thee before.

. Forgive it, Brother mine.
Whatever burden weighs within thy breast,
Come hither, come ; yea, leave it at this shrine
That is a nest.

[*The by-standers listen with open-mouthed
amaze while THE WOLF speaks in a great
voice of grief.*

THE WOLF

Ah, no. Lifetime is over ; — past.
These words I have, are first and last.

[*To FRANCIS with heart-broken yearning*]

With all my thirst . . .

With all my power, —

I strove to linger out this hour. —

Since I did live, for this one day.

This only day, when first, — ah, yes !
 I heard thy words of loveliness ;
 Out of thy mouth ; —
 Out of thy heart, —
 Only to-day ! —
 I strove . . . but could not stay apart ; —
 I could not creep away.
 O, I was fain ; — but never can
 Lift me so far to be a man ; —
 Man the one that a Wolf would be ; —
 Even as thee, — even as thee !
 Midnight is come ; the bond is loose. —
 What worth to me their stony truce ?
 The peace is broken, and void again,
 Betwixt us beasts and men. —
 So. — Let them stone, and hunt, and spurn :
 Slay me ! — I will not turn. —
 Only to be forevermore
 ‘ Wolf-at-the-Door ! — Wolf-at-the-Door ! ’
 I have no will to live ; —
 Let none forgive !
 All other craving is gone by.
 Better to die, — than live and be
 Man without love ; —
 Better to die.

630 THE WOLF OF GUBBIO

FRANCIS

Nay, Brother Wolf, ah, grieve not so ;
All was forgiven.

THE WOLF

[*in anguish*]

Thou dost not know
All. But thou shalt ; — the one thing left : —
My gift ! . . . My theft.

[*He creeps towards ASSUNTA, who looks
back at him bewildered.*]

And thou, Madonna, ah, forgive
The one long day I strove to live !
O Lady, let my heart lie there,
Even with its halting prayer
Unspoken.

I give you as I may. — My old wolf's heart
. . . Is broken.

[*He limps with lowered head into LU-
CREZIA'S house.*]

THE PEOPLE

Where is he going to?
. My way?
. Your way?

THE WOLF OF GUBBIO 631

See! See!

. . . . Old Lucrezia's doorway!

Look at him! — Into the house unbidden!

What has he hidden? — What has he hidden?

[*Reënter THE WOLF, with the swaddled Babe in his teeth. He goes up through the crowd which parts before him, — to ASSUNTA, — and lays the Baby in the Manger. The faces of the parents show their amazement, incredulous hope, wild joy, as they see that it is their own.*

THE PEOPLE

— Miracle! — Miracle! — Holy Bambino!

— Mother of Mercies! —

. And how could he know?

A man — a wolf — a man!

— No, no! —

Fra Lupone! — Fra Lupone! —

— Fra Lupone of Gubbio!

THE CHILDREN

The Christ is found! All's well!

THE KNIGHTS

. . . Noël, . . . Noël!

[*By-standers embrace THE WOLF, with rapture.*

FRANCIS picks up a long green branch from the strewings, and makes as if he would play an invisible viol over his arm, singing the while.

The Children gleefully pick up rushes in like manner, and look to him as he calls aloud for gladness.

FRANCIS

Oh, and the very stars shall sing
For joy of this glad thing.

Lo, Love is born!

Though we crown Him yet with thorn,
Though we laugh Him all to scorn,
Love, — Love is born!

Curiaín.

EPILOGUE

FRANCIS *parts the curtains and stands forth,
shading his eyes, as if he were still searching
the darkness beyond the tented place.*

FRANCIS

And if there be out yonder any Wolf,
Or great or small, behold, —
Come, little brother Wolves, come in, come
hither,
Out of the cold !



Photograph by Emery Walker, Ltd.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

From the painting by John Opie in the National Portrait.
Gallery, London

PORTRAIT OF MRS. W.

A Play in Three Acts
with an Epilogue

(Published in 1922)

Foreword

THIS play attempts to bring into close range a name and a face.

Dramatically, it is wilfully built against traditions of stage structure. But the plea of all that Mary Wollstonecraft had to leave unsaid and undone, the tragedy of death at the hour so looked to for deeds, or utterance, that clamor of unfulfilment, made it impossible for this chronicler to deal with the story according to its more obvious stage possibilities.

Mary Wollstonecraft was born the 27th of April, 1759. She was the eldest daughter in a large family, harassed and saddened from their earliest youth by their father's intemperance and brutality and the poverty which it brought upon them. The mother, whose embittered days were forever scarred upon her daughter's heart, died in 1780, and soon the father sank to such depths that his three daughters were forced to leave him and seek home and livelihood elsewhere.

Eking out with sheer character the wants of

her underfed intellect, Mary, a girl of striking beauty and rich personality, gave herself with generous devotion to supporting her sisters and brothers. For the next few years she was absorbed in tasks uncongenial to youth of such rare promise until, by way of translations from the French and other hack work, her genius found its natural vent in literary expression. An early pamphlet on the *Education of Daughters* showed how her own unhappy experience was dominating her thought.

In 1792 appeared *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the work with which her name is always associated.

This book, a protest against the assumption that woman is only a plaything of man, asserts that intellectual companionship is the chief and the only lasting basis for happiness in marriage. The plainness of her speech and her plea for equal education of the sexes provoked more censure than praise. She was accused, though unjustly, of attacking not only the institution of marriage, but also orthodox religion, especially by those who had not read the book, as Horace Walpole, who called her a "philosophizing serpent" and a "hyena in petticoats."

Notwithstanding, the book had wide fame, both at home and abroad, was translated into German and French, and is now recognized as the pioneer work in the enfranchisement of woman.

In December, 1792, she went to Paris, then in the first throes of the Revolution. There, she met Gilbert Imlay, late captain in Washington's army, and there in the days of the Terror she was living with him as his wife. Whether the omission of the marriage rite was due to principle, or to the danger in those perilous days of a ceremony which would oblige her to proclaim herself a British subject and thereby risk imprisonment or perhaps death, or to her lifelong contact with the unhappy marriages of her mother, her sister, and others — marriages from which the law permitted no escape — can no longer be known. One thing he who runs may read; her letters to Imlay. Of all things in the records of joyous self-deception, there are few to match the tragedy of the progress from the jubilant voice of a blithe young wife, a triumphant and tender mother, to the dumb, unrecconciled agony of realization at the end, and her frustrated attempt at suicide.

For all her heroism, with all her beauty and

with all her gifts, self-wasted on a libertine! And her little daughter, to eyes of others, a reproach. And herself, the author of *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

So ended the tempest of that brief romance. But the undying courage that drew her back to life, with her sense of the quest that faces all humanity — especially bewildered womankind — this spirit it is which sheds a light upon the brief term of her history. None can now doubt her height of heart, or the ardor of faith and generosity with which she threw into the moral scales of Life, herself, and her whole nature, even as men give themselves to war.

That she read the noblest meanings into the coldness of Godwin's mind at this hour of rebound was the natural thing for a tortured spirit. That his love for her let a sudden burst of glory in upon his unsuspecting imagination, none can doubt. What might they not have done together, for each other and for the world, if she had lived to interpret life for him and for herself! But one thing cut off all their theories, their deeds undone, their words unsaid; and that was death.

To Godwin the end of everything!

To the author of this play, Mary Wollstonecraft is, first and last, a being richly human, a girl untimely old in cares disproportionately assumed by her abounding courage where they were not forced upon her. The truth of her — for those who had not seen her face to face — was buried beneath a landslide of unpractised theories and ideals beyond the reaches of her time, but aimed with such young wistfulness at heights of Life; a landslide of failure and rash youth.

And the youngness of her Mary, her child and Godwin's, and of Shelley, that day in late July, 1814, in Mr. Godwin's study in Skinner Street.

When Mary was sixteen.

J. P. M.

27 February, 1922



Portrait of Mrs. W.

ACT I

A Spring afternoon in London, 1796.

MR. OPIE'S painting-room in Berners Street.

A large panelled studio, with a row of casement-windows on the right,¹ and a door to the outer hall below them. — Another door, left, up. In the centre, up, a model-stand with a seat; tapestry behind it. Right, centre, an easel, back to the audience, and several canvases standing against it, their faces concealed. Left, centre, a large table with a few books and painting things upon it. Right, a small table with a few books. Down, left, a long seat.

MR. JOHN OPIE is still surveying his canvas with severe scrutiny. He has on a painting smock, and his palette is in his hand.

¹ Right and left are from the spectator's point of view.

His boy servant, a raw youth of fourteen, dogs him with a certain fascinated awe, apparently scenting some ulterior purpose for MR. OPIE'S afternoon. . . . OPIE crosses to the windows.

He pushes open the casement. — A near church-bell strikes four; to his evident satisfaction. — He leans out and looks into the street. — There is a chorus of Spring street-cries:

'Lavender, sweet lavender! . . . Fair fresh cherries, fair fresh cherries! — Sixpence the pound. — Buy my posies! — Fresh posies! — Lavender, lavender! — Fair — fresh — Cherries: — sixpence the pound! — Posies! — Cherries — Cherries!' —

OPIE takes a coin from his pocket and flings it out of the window to some one below, with a smiling gesture: then turns to the boy, TOM.

OPIE



O:—bring them in, Tom. . . . Persons of worship coming, to-day.

(Exit TOM.)

(OPIE helps himself into his coat, and is touching up his stock and his unpowdered queue, rather anxiously, when TOM reënters with a nosegay of vio-

lets. — OPIE points to his discarded painting tools, and while TOM removes them carefully, he pours water into a bowl, arranges the violets, thinking happily, and surveys the room and its foreground, picturing it with a special guest in mind. TOM watches him open-mouthed.)

OPIE

More chairs.... (TOM starts for the door, left.)
No, come back.... Bring that small, low chair, with the green cushion... and arms (*gesticulating. Smiling at TOM's astonishment*).... Persons of worship, Tom.

TOM

Muffins, sir?

OPIE

Muffins, of course.

TOM

If she comes by herself, sir...

OPIE

Ah! —

TOM

Shall I bring her up here, sir?

OPIE

The green chair, quick! — (*Exit TOM, left.*)

(*Enter, right, AMELIA ALDERSON with a pottle of cherries in a lace handkerchief, under her arm.*)

Ah! —

(*They look at each other with frank enjoyment. AMELIA all mirth for the moment, then gazes about the studio, ignoring him.*)

AMELIA

What, no one here?

OPIE

You. —

AMELIA

No one here at all! — And this street was to be twinkling with lanterns; and brocades trailing from the windows; and waits to be singing, in May — or June — or whatever it was, that day when first I came to the painting-room of the Cornish wonder. — Oh, here you are!

(*Curtsies to him.*)

(*Reënter TOM with two chairs*)

OPIE

We were watching for you, — Tom and I. —

For you, and that friendly dish of talk and tea.

AMELIA

But where's the tea?

OPIE

Bring it, Tom. — (*He places the chair with the green cushion for AMELIA and stands regarding the composition. Moves the bowl of violets nearer to the lady. TOM stands observing this, tranced. OPIE lays his hand on his shoulder.*) And the muffins. —

(*Exit TOM. — OPIE studies his arrangement. — AMELIA breaks the spell by uncovering her pottle and holding out the cherries.*)

AMELIA

Not a word about cherries! Look, I've brought an offering: from just outside your own door, and such a dear rosy old woman. — Gaze — taste — no, wear them! There's that something a little savage about you, — aboriginal. How would you look with ear-rings? — Let me try before the others come.

OPIE

The others?

AMELIA

All here in a moment. — Heavens, did n't you ask me to bring Mrs. Inchbald . . . if I must? And must n't I? — Dear creature! And her s-s-stammer with her! And did n't that bring Mr. Kemble? And would n't it have brought Mr. Holcroft but that he's working desperately on his tragedy? Oh, oh, — quick: before they come, tell me if this is true I heard the other day.

OPIE

No, certainly not. — But say it.

AMELIA

That Mr. Holcroft is in love with Mrs. Inchbald; — Mrs. Inchbald with Mr. Godwin; yes, Mr. Godwin, the author of 'Political Justice'; Mr. Godwin is in love with — Ah, let me see, where was I? —

OPIE

You know very well.

AMELIA

Very well, Mr. Godwin with Miss Alderson. — That I heard. But you know, the odd part of it is, — that he *is not*; he is not in love with me at all! Oh, the surprise, — the novelty of it! — Well, laggard sir?

OPIE

I'm thinking.

AMELIA

That is not at all the proper reply to me, an only child . . . away from Norwich . . . on a visit.

OPIE

There are a plenty of men in love with that only child, a-visiting from Norwich. But William Godwin is not one of them.

AMELIA

He showed me some pretty manners, though. But — who's he in love with?

OPIE

And I have no manners forsooth.

AMELIA

Not as many as a bear. . . . Uncouth you are; Mrs. Inchbald says so. (*Loops cherries over his ears, like ear-rings.*) Now you look like Othello. — Tell me (*sagely*): *Who has cast the spell over William Godwin?*

OPIE

Don't waste these moments on William Godwin. You must see the difference, little blue lady.

AMELIA

Blue stocking? Surely I don't deserve that. Such a few small stories. . . .

OPIE

And may they some day be longer and larger!

AMELIA

Bear!

OPIE

But it is n't of stockings I'm thinking.

AMELIA

Quaker!

OPIE

It is still that first sight that I had of you, in the doorway, — but just newly come; in that blue . . . that blue frock; and your shoulders and your hair. . . .

AMELIA

— Almost the color of Mary Wollstonecraft's hair —; only blonder.

OPIE

Lighter, brighter. — And you wore three little white feathers. . . .

AMELIA

My three feathers! — You did n't remember the three!

OPIE

Yes . . . there were —

(*Enter, right, MRS. INCHBALD*)

— there were too many feathers.

AMELIA

This is no way to speak to an only child so far away from Norwich. — Dear Mrs. Inchbald!

(*OPIE removes the cherries from his ears and greets her gravely.*)

650 P O R T R A I T O F M R S . W .

MRS. INCHBALD

Do you make love to all your sitters, Opie?

AMELIA

Oh, I have n't even sat for him yet! — Look:
(*Pointing to the cherries.*) sixpence the pound:
but they're cheaper in Norwich. . . .

MRS. INCHBALD

And the portrait.

AMELIA

Yes, we were just coming to that.

OPIE

It's but half done. She would see it, this afternoon.

AMELIA

(*darting towards the hidden canvas*)

Of course I would. — Go home to Norwich in two days more, and go without a glimpse of her portrait?

OPIE

Unfinished, as I've told you.

AMELIA

And not to be finished ever, without advice from me!

OPIE

I had almost given it up.

AMELIA

Give up that adorable creature? Nothing I ever saw in all this world . . . of all the little I have seen! — that did not disappoint me, but two things. Guess.

MRS. INCHBALD

What then?

AMELIA

The Cumberland lakes; and Mary Wollstonecraft!

MRS. INCHBALD

But why do you still call her Mary Wollstonecraft?

AMELIA

Mrs. Imlay, if you will, then.

(Reënter TOM with preparations for the tea-table. MRS. INCHBALD crosses him, laughing.)

MRS. INCHBALD

(to TOM)

‘Peter, my fan! My fan, Peter!’

TOM

You had no fan, ma’am, that I know of.

OPIE

(*motioning TOM away, smilingly*)

Ladies, you are her friends, are you not? I could beg you, be true to her in this. She is the truest-hearted champion you ever had.

MRS. INCHBALD

— It will be so useful to remember that, dear Opie; when I need a champion. Do go on.

OPIE

She was sitting for me: I had begged it. And I began this. But I cannot go on with it, till her face and her heart are . . . further from that shadow.

MRS. INCHBALD

What shadow? . . . Oh, Mr. Imlay’s shadow.

OPIE
(doggedly)

Yes, Imlay.

MRS. INCHBALD

So recent a widow!

OPIE

Her history is full of sorrow, madam; personal grief and disaster coming close upon the dire scene of the revolution in France; where — as you must have heard, she met Mr. Imlay . . .

MRS. INCHBALD

Yes, we've all heard that. And a Republican marriage it was, no doubt, if any.

AMELIA

Of course. As an Englishwoman her life would have been in danger — but Mr. Imlay was from America. Was he not?

OPIE

Yes. He had even fought in Washington's army. — He matters nothing now. — The point is only that she wrecked her hope and happiness upon a rock. She was a high-hearted woman,

looking — as most of us were looking — for a millennium to come through the French struggle; only she believed and trusted and gave her all. And he was no idealist; but a libertine.

AMELIA

(looking on the canvas)

... Ah! ...

(MRS. INCHBALD hastens beside her. They are silent for a moment.)

AMELIA

(to OPIE, with emotion)

You will show them now that you can paint a woman's face. You will show them now.

MRS. INCHBALD

Droll, is it not, to think of Mr. Walpole referring to her as '*that hyena in petticoats.*'

AMELIA

Oh, you may be sure, Mr. Walpole took care never to meet her.

MRS. INCHBALD

He would do that, you know. — And after all she's certainly not a *laughing* hyena. . . .

OPIE

She has been laughing very little this year, madam.

AMELIA

Finish it, finish it. Now. At once.

OPIE

I am waiting: — for another look.

AMELIA

The look is coming. I swear it. I promise it.— I've seen it. (*Coaxingly.*) And I have seen her much lately. I can tell you this. Just now she is amazingly serene.

MRS. INCHBALD

Spring, spring! . . . Even to a desolate old turtle like me, the trees in the Park! (*Approaching the window-seat.*) But tell me, Opie. Did you ever really *see* this late-lamented Mr. Imlay? Of the United States of North America? — And is he dead? Or missing merely? And why do you look at me, you Cornish man, as if I'd said something that I should n't? — Here comes the Tragic Muse!

(AMELIA waves her hand at the window and runs out to meet the newcomers. OPIE stands at the open door to welcome them. TOM is placing the tea-tray, up. — Reënter AMELIA, with MRS. SIDDONS and JOHN KEMBLE, her brother.)

MRS. SIDDONS

Dear Opie!

AMELIA

Here's your throne. Come in, come in!

MRS. SIDDONS

Truly, the very pavements melt with Spring.
John, will you tie my sandal?

MRS. INCHBALD

Now will you hear the Muse?

MRS. SIDDONS

(greeting her)

Elizabeth!

OPIE

(smilingly busy with the tray)

How does Cecilia, now?

MRS. SIDDONS

(*maternally*)

Oh, winsomely. Dark little witch!

AMELIA

Your image.

MRS. SIDDONS

Say you so? — There's an arch flatterer. She *is* like me . . . (*Thoughtfully.*) Save in her manner.

KEMBLE

(*tersely*)

Too much comedy.

MRS. SIDDONS

(*deprecatingly*)

Still, my dear Brother! . . . (*To the others.*) — She is only three!

(*Enter ROBERT SOUTHEY with MR. JAMES WILSON. SOUTHEY is a buoyant young man of twenty-two. He has a Rose, partly wrapped, in his left hand, with a Book.*)

SOUTHEY

Am I late? — Is she here?

OPIE

Three She's — and all persons of worship. —

SOUTHEY

But not Mrs. Wollstonecraft, yet. I brought her this Rose. I'm saving it. Also, I've taken the liberty to bring a new friend whom I met just now at the book-shop; a great admirer of that lady's. Mr. Wilson of the United States of America; also interested in books: in selling them. *(Bowling to WILSON.)*

WILSON

(deprecatingly)

The Upper Market, Wilmington, Delaware.

SOUTHEY

You'll let him see the portrait?

WILSON

It would be a privilege, Mr. Opie.

SOUTHEY

Something else. . . . *(Looks back at the door. Opens it, and returns, shaking his head.)* I've left him, somehow! — A man, a mere man. I

met him just now, yes, at Johnson's book-shop. And — without your kind permission, I told him you would let *him* see the portrait. He's a great admirer of that lady's works; that moved me. A very diffident man. 'T would give him pleasure. — His name was . . . Symes. —

(Enter SYMES. He is a silent-looking, shy, youngish man; with a touch of native dignity and singularity about him: something between awkwardness and unworldliness. He stands, looking about with modest interest, till SOUTHEY introduces him to OPIE.)

Ah, here you are! *(To OPIE)* Mr. Symes.

(OPIE shakes hands with him, and leaves the two men with SOUTHEY, indicating that SOUTHEY is to show them the portrait.)

OPIE

(to SOUTHEY)

You've seen it. — Come and sit at the feet of our Tragic Muse, and learn to write blank verse as it should be spoken. . . . He's a very young poet, ladies.

MRS. INCHBALD

Ah, we know Mr. Southey.

(SOUTHEY, bowing, conducts WILSON and

SYMES *up*. *They contemplate the portrait; — WILSON turns away, first, and comes down, evidently filled with admiration and expectancy. SOUTHEY joins the ladies at the table. SYMES remains up, a little way off, en silhouette, from the portrait, contemplating it alone. MRS. INCHBALD comes down, with her tea-cup, to the long seat, and beguiles MR. WILSON.*)

MRS. INCHBALD

I wonder how *my* little book fares in your country, Mr. Wilson . . . ‘A Simple Story’? (WILSON *somewhat perplexed*.) . . . But here is Mr. Southey, all eagerness to talk with you about America; or perhaps I should say *North America*. Mr. Southey is one of our . . . very young Romanticists. (SOUTHEY, *over his tea-cup, resigns himself to this description*.) I am not aware of the names of all your interesting States; but Mr. Southey and some friends of his have — as you may not have heard — founded a colony there; yes, in the States; where all the Millennialists are going to live. (SOUTHEY *chokes with protest*. WILSON *listens, bewildered*.) The name of their community is, I think, Susquina; — no, no, — Sus-que-hanna?

SOUTHEY

The Colony was not founded, after all, Mr. Wilson.

WILSON

But we have a river, madam, by the name of Susquehanna.

SOUTHEY

Lovely name. I had heard of it. It lent itself to all our hopes of another and a better world. 'Susquehanna' . . . And most of your people read; do they not?

WILSON

(drawing a pamphlet from his pocket contentedly)
Watts's 'Lyric Poems'; Watson's 'Apology for Christianity'; Wollstonecraft's 'French Revolution' (only last season); and I am taking back with me her 'Letters from Norway.'

SOUTHEY

They read Mary Wollstonecraft!

WILSON

They will read anything now, Sir, by the author of 'The Vindication of the Rights of Woman!'

MRS. INCHBALD

(to change the subject)

And Mr. Washington remains your president till he dies?

WILSON

Mr. Washington, madam, to our great regret, declines a third term. He has just returned for a much-needed rest, to his estate at Mount Vernon.

MRS. INCHBALD

What a disappointing creature! It would have been interesting to call upon him when one joins Mr. Southey's community at Susquehanna where they — But, do tell me this; *will* they marry or will they not, Mr. Southey? Or are they merely to write verses and tend sheep? Is Philosopher William Godwin with you? And if not, why not?

SOUTHEY

No, madam, Mr. Godwin is — perhaps, too wise; and perhaps too much a man of the city. To write verses and tend sheep is, indeed, a simplified statement of our hopes.

MRS. INCHBALD

Men never do what they write about; do they? And after all, what is a Philosopher but a man who insists upon paying a shilling a pound for his cherries? So perhaps William Godwin *will* join you. — He's written with such theoretical acuteness against marriage, I vow he will end by bringing a wife with him: to till the soil of Susquehanna.

SOUTHEY

Our Susquehanna dream, Mr. Wilson, is two years old and gone by. — I would have gone: but for the simple lack of money. I remain, to till — in a sense — the soil of my own country. But in the meantime I have earned no less than seven pounds and two pair of breeches. Not amiss, dear radical Lady, after all?

MRS. INCHBALD

(surveying him, approvingly)

Not at all amiss. — And then, you are not counting in your book —

WILSON

'Joan of Arc' — and dedicated, I see, Sir, to Mary Wollstonecraft.

MRS. INCHBALD

You don't call her Mrs. Imlay, then?

SOUTHEY

(loudly, with reckless enthusiasm)

Mary Wollstonecraft stands alone. She must always, by whatever name we call her. She is as solitary as truth; shining at the bottom of the well: no parasite of marriage.

MRS. SIDDONS

How true. — And then, her Swedish letters. I was charmed, I may say, even enthralled. This latest book, dear William Godwin sent me, that alone, softened, methought, with sorrow's finger on it, gave me the fixed resolve that I must know her. And above all, her Courage! Even I, who speak for queens, — as a mere woman still, I thrill to hear this woman's heart beat high, with such devotion for her sisters, *all*. — In the next world, the women will be valued, yes, there perhaps, more than they are in this!

KEMBLE

Sarah? — And this, from You?

MRS. SIDDONS

(*prophetically*)

Yes, John! — From me. (*Shaking her head in turn, at OPIE.*) Yes, dear John Opie, yes! (*Recovering her serenity, and holding out her cup.*) . . . Delicious tea.

AMELIA

(*coming down*)

And is she not worth knowing? But, you see, some few who do not know her can be harsh enough to please the envious. You hear it everywhere her name is spoken; from strangers who resent her hopes for woman, and her condemnation of fashionable parasites, — how Mr. Walpole called her ‘that hyena in petticoats.’ . . .

(*Enter MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT. — She is bonnily dressed, a large hat tied over her heavy auburn hair; noticeably quieter than the others, in speech and motion; a touch of shadow in her voice now and then.*)

Hyena! (*Impressively.*) ‘Hyena in petticoats!’

MARY

Yes, I am here. (*They turn.*) Your hyena never meant to keep you waiting.

(*There is a breeze of welcome and laughter, as*

666 P O R T R A I T O F M R S . W .

they turn. OPIE greets her with the quiet of an old friend, later presenting WILSON. AMELIA comes down to embrace her. SYMES disappears, up, behind canvases.)

AMELIA

Oh, here you are at last!

MRS. SIDDONS

(rising)

Dear Mrs. Imlay!

(MARY goes up to greet her; and turns back to face SOUTHEY, who holds out his Rose.)

SOUTHEY

I knew you were coming. — And I've brought you a Rose.

MARY

(taking it and putting it in the fichu of her dress, sweetly)

A Rose. . . . What it is to be a poet, — a Young Poet! . . . And what would we older women do without you? — We shall have some talk together? Presently?

(She turns away again to join MRS. SID-

DONS, KEMBLE *and the others at the tea-table to which OPIE leads WILSON. They talk together.*

SYMES *looks down cautiously, apparently seeking a way out unnoticed. As MRS. INCHBALD comes down accompanied by JOHN KEMBLE, who inspects a book or two through his eye-glass, SYMES retreats again, among the pictures.)*

MRS. INCHBALD

(to SOUTHEY)

In parenthesis, who is Mr. Symes? . . . and what?

SOUTHEY

(*shaking his head*)

God knows.

(KEMBLE *joins them.*)

MRS. INCHBALD

He looks a bit like Hamlet; out of work. — Not like *your* Hamlet, John. And after all, — the times can never have been really out of joint for Hamlet: he had such a ready flow of language! — John has it too: but only on the stage.

SOUTHEY

I don't know him at all: but we fell into talk at Johnson's book-shop; and I bade him along with me. I suppose it was very-young poet. Was n't it?

MRS. INCHBALD

Very, very Young-Poet. — He is something of a Quakerish Romeo, on second thought. He has an indescribable air of feeling himself in the wrong place: an always too-late manner. Yes, John, I venture — as a modest female writer, married and a widow, that man will always be too late.

KEMBLE

Elizabeth, why do you cling so to this draughty corner by the door?

MRS. INCHBALD

Draughty, on a day like this, John? Come then. Another crumpet.

(As she leads him back to the tea-table, SYMES comes down hastily to SOUTHEY.)

SYMES

A word with you, Sir, to thank you for your

kindness. I should have told you, I realize now, too late; but I — I desired so much, to see her once more; at a — distance; I mean a slight distance.

SOUTHEY

Mrs. . . . Imlay? You've met Mrs. Imlay?

SYMES

Once or twice . . . a few times, a few years ago. She would hardly recall it. In fact I know not if I dare to meet her now. But it is very much to have seen her, without . . . being a source of annoyance to her. I had the misfortune to offend that lady through the foolishhest . . . inexperience. Words would fail me to tell how; much as I respect — even venerate her. — I will go, now.

SOUTHEY

(looking keenly into his face)

I protest. — You must take this opportunity to right yourself. Do so, Mr. Symes. She's the tenderest soul alive, and the proudest.

SYMES

I believe that. But it is the pride alone that I've

670 PORTRAIT OF MRS. W.

seen . . . closely. — I'm very miserable. (*With desperate honesty.*) If you are a poet, you know what that is. (SOUTHEY *nods solemnly.*)

SOUTHEY

Go and say good-bye to Opie. Then, — *don't go!*
(*He pushes him gently towards OPIE who comes down at that moment. They speak together, left.*)

MRS. INCHBALD

(*coming down with KEMBLE, who bears a bowl of cherries majestically*)

Come, Mrs. Imlay, we are going to hear this young man's Sonnet to you. Mr. Wilson says it dedicates his 'Joan of Arc' —

SOUTHEY

(*correcting*)

'Triumph of Woman!'

MRS. INCHBALD

To be sure: and before he ever saw Mrs. Imlay, romantic boy. Do repeat it, Mr. Southey. No? Perhaps John will read it, if you have a copy here . . .

KEMBLE

Elizabeth, my voice, as you seem to forget . . .

MRS. INCHBALD

Oh, John, dear, don't be so majestic.

SOUTHEY

I think I could remember it, if I were in a corner.

MRS. INCHBALD

Go in a corner then, and think it up. (*To the others, up-stage.*) Mr. Southey is going to recite his sonnet on Mrs. Imlay. Do l-l-listen.

SOUTHEY

(to MARY)

You won't think me impertinent?

'The lily cheek, the purple light of love' —

The liquid lustre of the melting eye.

Mary! of these the poet sung, for these

Did Woman triumph: turn not thou away . . .

.
(MRS. INCHBALD *is feeding cherries to* MR.

KEMBLE, *unheeding.* SOUTHEY *speaks closely to* MARY)

So! You know the rest. — There is an unhappy

man across the room. (*Indicating SYMES.*) He tells me that he once offended you. He dares not speak; but yet he longs to. Do you transfigure him; with happiness.

MARY

Could I do that?

SOUTHEY

Can any one else?

MARY

Oh, you have 'eyes of youth.' (*Lightly.*) Go. Bring him; bring him before us. — What is his name?

SOUTHEY

His name is — Symes. . . .

MARY

— Symes! — (*With a sudden dismaying recollection.*)

MRS. INCHBALD

(*turning*)

Symes! — All this fanfare at the name of a man

called *Symes*. And we, assembled in the studio of the Cornish wonder, — with the Tragic Muse, the belle of Norwich, John Kemble, — to say absolutely nothing of the authoress of ‘A Simple Story.’ I have n’t been so humbled since I used to lunch on spring onions by the roadside, when Mr. Inchbald and I travelled with the company. ‘But see, he comes. — Walk we apart.’

(Withdrawing, as SYMES stands facing them.)

MARY

(who has recovered herself, speaks with a kindly manner that gathers composure, as of an older woman addressing a young man, though he is of like age)

Mr. Symes. *(SYMES approaches her gravely.)*

SYMES

(almost with awe)

Mrs. Wollstonecraft. . . . I beg your pardon. That was the name I knew when, in my rashness, — my ignorance, — my temerity which I can hardly understand, I had the — misfortune . . .

MARY

Ah, Mr. Symes . . . it is so long ago . . . or seems so. The hardships and sorrows of a whole people have opened all our eyes to things larger than ourselves.

SYMES

That is true. Will you permit me to tell you, then, at this distance, without hope . . . and never again, perhaps, to venture so near —

MARY

(with abashed concern)

Mr. Symes . . .

SYMES

That when I had the audacity to — to —

MARY

Proffer me your hand, in marriage, —

SYMES

Nay, to beg for yours, — it was with all the reverence, — the adoration in the world; though it was madness in me, as I saw in a day. It was that one saving sense of my preposterous hope

that drove me to seek a messenger, rather than to speak for myself. You scarcely knew me.

MARY

True.

SYMES

(simply)

And yet, as Poets know, these things do happen suddenly; sometimes.

MARY

(touched by his meekness, speaking shyly)

Yes. It is true.

SYMES

When I learned your terrible message of scorn and grief, I saw — too late — how I had made myself misunderstood.

MARY

Oh, I did misunderstand. Forgive me that. We have so much to learn. I was younger, and very sad; and proud. Life seemed unbearably hard upon me, with burdens from other lives, not mine. I was beside myself with the effort to be stoical.

SYMES

And do you think a man could look on you, do you think a man could hear you speak, and learn unmoved of those burdens that threatened to crush your youth? . . . Could any man of feeling look on the spectacle of Genius rending the spirit of a lovely female, from within; and the thorns of this world thrust in her pathway; and keep humbly to his by-path, with no dream of being a rescuer? — Yes. I confess to you, I was a trespasser. I tried to find out all I could of your life, your trials, your natural protectors; and finding no help there, I lost my head. And if, in that state of fascinated desperation, I conceived the wild dream — that I might be blessed to lighten your destiny . . . I pray you to forgive my youth.

MARY

Oh, I see all, now. And will you not try to see, that to my tormented soul, at bay, the — the mention your . . . messenger made, . . . of your worldly possessions . . . seemed . . . seemed to me —

SYMES

An insult. Yes, you called it that.

MARY

Forgive me. Your truth-telling makes it all clear; and me so humble. If you had dared to speak, yourself —

SYMES

I was a dumb thing; an uncouth creature always; timid of himself. My downfall made me feel that I had no self to be anxious for, any longer. So I come by words more honestly.

MARY

(simply: bewildered by his reality)

What are you, Mr. Symes? . . . You are Something.

SYMES

Do we know what we are? But I am a very obscure person. I was thinking of taking orders, when I met you. I was an only son; with a few women-folk. It was what they desired. We had always had enough. — Then, when I saw you, and read what you had written; and understood your great thoughts struggling in this insolent world, — I knew that it was my duty to follow my conscience only; with one taper in my hand, a

little truth that lighted the world newly. — And I longed to see whatever *you* should see. And afterwards . . . I learned that you were living and thinking over the water, in those terrible days with the French. And next I heard that you were — were Mrs. Imlay. And I hoped that I might but see you, once again.

MARY

Oh, many times again. I welcome the chance to ask your pardon.

SYMES

(much younger and happier)

I am deeply in your debt, that you permit me to tell you the truth. Surely, happiness must be something like this.

(Up-stage, they all rise suddenly from the tea-table and face OPIE, who has the canvas with her portrait in his arms.)

AMELIA

Come, Mary!

OPIE

You have only to mount the model-stand and help my ruthless critics to an opinion.

MRS. SIDDONS

Mr. Opie waits for an Aurora Borealis, —

(MARY goes up. AMELIA takes off her hat for her and pats it. OPIE places a chair on the model-stand, poses MARY in it; and then sets the Portrait on the easel, facing front.)

SOUTHEY

You know, Mrs. Imlay, until the Americans build a new world, and that world is peopled with new women all like you, I fear you will never be forgiven for looking as you look.

OPIE

Too personal, Mr. Southey. The expression is the question.

(Enter, by the open door, WILLIAM GODWIN.
He pauses, — catches MARY'S look and silently greets her with a buoyant gesture.
Her face lights, shyly.)

AMELIA

There it is!

MRS. INCHBALD

(turning)

Enter, a philosopher, late and uninvited!

OPIE

Late, but long expected. Godwin!

(The group breaks up. GODWIN goes up, and is greeted by each in turn. MARY sits, smiling; but as if she were weary.)

MRS. SIDDONS

(coming down)

So late! And to my deep regret, friend Godwin, I must go, alas.

KEMBLE

And I. — Elizabeth, you will come with us, now.

(Authoritatively, as she is saying to TOM:)

MRS. INCHBALD

Some hot tea . . . for Mr. Godwin.

MRS. INCHBALD

(archly)

Must I, John? Do you think it improper — for a widow — to remain long in the company of the Author of ‘Political Justice’? John, how suspicious.

KEMBLE

You and Miss Alderson are dining with us.

AMELIA

I come with you.

*(They all, including MARY, come down from
the model-stand, taking leave of OPIE.)*

SOUTHEY

(to MARY)

And may I come to see you soon?

MARY

Oh, very soon, — Ah me, how dreadful of me.
There's my Fanny waiting below. How could
I have left her for so long!

SOUTHEY

Let me take you both home.

MARY

I left her playing with Opie's Dorcas.

SOUTHEY

(rushing to the tea-table)

Let me take her a muffin: May I? Or no!
These ear-rings!

*(He seizes some cherries on their stems and
returns to MARY.)*

(SYMES approaches her wistfully.)

MARY

Mr. Symes. . . . Now that I can truly value a true friend . . . (*She inspects the cherries, and nods encouragingly to SOUTHEY.*) Tell her, Mother will come home now, very soon. We'll go together. . . . (*Exit SOUTHEY.*)

SYMES

(*with suspense*)

And 'Fanny.' . . . Is that . . . is that . . .

MARY

It is my little girl. (*He seems stunned.*) My girl-child.

SYMES

I did not know. — I never heard that . . . I am glad indeed to learn that you have such a source of comfort . . . in your loss.

MARY

She is . . . a consolation and a strength. — Mr. Symes, I fear you have not heard all, indeed. I must not accept your friendship under any pretense. But I cannot make all my friends understand my way of thinking — nor of speaking. They *will* call me Mrs. Imlay.

PORTRAIT OF MRS. W. 683

SYMES

You mean —?

MARY

I did not marry Mr. Imlay. . . . I believed that faith and love were better forever through utter freedom; and *only* faith and love. But all came to an end . . . in chaos; after I had been true to that faith and that love. — Mr. Imlay is dead, you see, only to me; only to me. — And I am Mary Wollstonecraft; and that is my daughter, . . . my little girl-child.

(GODWIN *turns back from the door with*
OPIE.)

SYMES

(*to OPIE, like a strangled man*)

I beg to thank you, Sir . . . for an afternoon . . . of revelations. — I shall hope to see Mrs. Imlay's portrait . . . again, when it is completed.

(*He bows very respectfully to MARY, and*
exit.)

AMELIA

What a curious creature! Let him get downstairs alone, and safely. Then I'll go, too —

(*She peeps after him, and waves her hand*
for good-bye. Exit.)

OPIE

Miss Alderson! — One moment. (*Exit after her.*)

(WILLIAM GODWIN and MARY are left standing face to face. But she is clouded, again, by SYMES' evident agitation.)

GODWIN

(*looking at her with a sage gentleness*)

You were speaking of . . . Fanny? (*She nods, mutely. His voice is gentle with a newness of careful tenderness.*) She told me you were here, as I came by.

MARY

Fanny!

GODWIN

Fanny, in her own speech; like a small rainbow messenger, to point the way. She pointed up. — And when I followed, what should I find indeed but You, enthroned? (*She backs away, gently, evidently almost dismayed at his enveloping gentleness. He makes a step after her; then on a second thought, steps back and stands still. He speaks with sudden adoring passion.*) Oh, stand

there so, again, for a moment; — for me! . . .
(*Smiling, she obeys his gesture: and steps up on the model-stand, trying to be gay, but deeply moved.*) Why do your eyes drop from mine, now?

MARY

There is some change in your aspect surely, neighbor Godwin.

GODWIN

Mary!

MARY

(*tremulously*)

And there must be a change in mine as well . . .
if you see me as one 'enthroned' . . . How
different . . . how different —

GODWIN

Different . . . ?

MARY

From . . . what *he* was.

GODWIN

You are the source and centre of all the changes.

How did I ever see you otherwise? The blind worm that I have been! Opie is right. — We would-be philosophers who put to death our eyes and understanding —

MARY
(*laughing*)

Hear him!

GODWIN

Mary, it is true, that I was struggling with doubts . . . not doubts merely; Fear; Fear: think of it! Fear lest the gods might shake my life — long gray serenity — with a more god-like agitation. — Mary, *I feared* the whirlwinds that have gone over you, wonder of wonders, and left you still unbowed! I went away . . . to be rid of my fear; to know myself; to see you as you are. — And I see you as you are; now. — Never before: never before. And I know I am not, as I tried to think, blinded by your human sweetness. (*She covers her face with her hands.*) No, let me tell you; let me tell myself. As the days passed, the surer I grew, from longing. — And I came to-day, only to see the beginning of your portrait. And here at the gate,

— your own child calls to me: she bids me go higher. And up I climb, to reach you: and the door is open. And then, of a sudden, for a hill-top look, I see you as you are!

(He holds his arms wide. MARY, on the edge of the model-stand, clasping her hands together, looks back at him, luminously. — Reënter OPIE, and halts with sudden unusual tact.)

OPIE

I have it. They are all of them right. It shall be finished now. — I have the look.

(MARY hastens down from the model-stand. OPIE is about to give her her hat again, when MRS. INCHBALD reënters exuberantly. She sweeps in the loiterers with a glance.)

MRS. INCHBALD

Ah, there it is, precisely where I left it, — my fan! *(Going up to her earlier seat, she takes the fan.)* Did you know, dear Mrs. Imlay, some one is waiting to take you home? Young Mr. Southey, yes. And John wants a word with you now, Godwin, — about the play. Oh, yes, he was

688 P O R T R A I T O F M R S . W .

after coming back for my fan, of course; but we could n't risk his young, young mind! I knew the two philosophers would be hurling their scorn —

GODWIN

Scorn? On such an afternoon?

MRS. INCHBALD

On all the commonplaces of this world.

OPIE

As for instance?

MRS. INCHBALD

Why, you Cornish wonder, what is the most commonplace thing in all this world? . . . What indeed, — but Marriage, Marriage, Marriage!

*(She nods debonairly to MARY and OPIE,
takes GODWIN's arm and leads him away.)*

CURTAIN

ACT II

29, *The Polygon, Somers Town, on a sunny
summer day*

Scene: a living-room with a wide casement-window at back, centre. The doors, upper left and down right, stand open, that to the right leading to a corridor. Down, left, a double doorway, closed. The windows stand open, all. A cluster of chairs huddles together, waiting to be bestowed. A large table towards the centre holds numerous unrelated objects, including a tea-set in evident disorder, some books and a large hour-glass. One or two packing-cases cumber the floor at its foot. Down, right centre, a long Empire sofa.

UPPIE, an austere but dignified housekeeper in the forties, stands looking out of the window, with a silver tea-pot in one hand, and a polishing-cloth in the other. She thrusts out her head anon, and shakes the cloth, then speaks, with kindness softening her authoritative voice.

UPPIE

(to one in the garden below)

No, no, . . . Dinna pat him. The dog is not our dog; he may bite thee. . . . Dinna pat him. Flowers is best. That's so, now. . . . Pick some for Uppie. — (*Withdrawing her head and reciting sonorously.*) . . . 'Gilead is mine and Má-nasses is mine; over Edom . . . have I cast out my shoe.' . . . 'Why hop ye so, ye high hills?' . . .

(Resumes her polishing. Enter, right, with wide eyes, OPIE's boy, TOM, doubtfully.)

TOM

Number 29? . . . Is this Number 29?

UPPIE

Of course it is.

TOM

How be I to know?

UPPIE

The number's on the door.

TOM

The door were open wide. — I'll fetch it.

UPPIE

What'll you fetch? — Leave that door where it is: and leave it open. — There's other things to come. (*Exit TOM. UPPIE goes to the window and looks out with softened mien. She calls.*) Take care: thou'll hurt thy little hands in the gateway there . . . Mind . . .

(*Reënter TOM, with a swathed picture in his arms*)

UPPIE

What's that?

TOM

It's for Mr. Godwin. That's what Mr. Opie said.

(*He takes off the covering, and leans the picture against the table. It is OPIE'S portrait of MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, finished and framed.*)

UPPIE

That's her . . . that's her!

TOM

When did Mr. Godwin come to here? I've seen that chair o' his in the old lodgings.

UPPIE

Go on, Boy. I'm busy. I must be upstairs and down to set the place to rights.

(Turns the picture to the wall, left, carefully.)

TOM

(drawing in his head from the window)

Here comes a lady; she's puzzled, too.

(Enter MRS. INCHBALD, who pauses as she sees the two)

MRS. INCHBALD.

This is Number 29? . . . Am I right?

UPPIE

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. INCHBALD

Mr. Godwin l-l-lives here?

UPPIE

(with reserve)

No,—yes, ma'am. In a manner. He is moving in.

MRS. INCHBALD

Moving in?—And *he* is out, then? So. I'm an early guest. He'll not be back soon? . . . There

is no chop waiting in the Dutch oven? . . . But where *is* the Dutch oven? — You here, Peter? — Have you got a new master?

TOM

Came on an errand from Mr. Opie, ma'am.

MRS. INCHBALD

Oh, to be sure! — 'T was Mr. Opie who told me of Godwin's new lodgings. I thought to surprise him with a greeting. I can't wait. . . . Make yourself useful, Peter, while the ph-ph-philosopher is out. (*To UPPIE.*) I suppose you don't know — (*Inspecting her dubiously.*) Heigh-ho, no matter! Will you give me a pen? I'll leave a note for him. — (*Laughing.*) Poor dear soul! New tea-cups . . . I don't remember those. . . . It's a luxury! . . . Two chairs; unfamiliar. *Green* tea . . . (*uncovering a caddy, and sniffing at it, to UPPIE'S indignation.*) *Green* tea . . . (*bewildered.*) An hour-glass. I've seen that. (*To UPPIE.*) You expect him soon?

(*Exit TOM, unwillingly, backing out.*)

UPPIE

(*coldly*)

I can't say, ma'am. He left no word with *me*.

MRS. INCHBALD

Ah, well! 'T is useless to dally longer. . . . Pray, desire my compliments to Mr. Godwin when he comes back; and tell him that Mrs. Inchbald dropped in for a moment, to remind him of the play this evening. Oh, to be sure, I'll tell him, myself.

*(Takes the pen from the table indicated by
UPPIE and sits down to scribble a note, with
absorption.)*

UPPIE

*(to herself sonorously, while she stands, inspecting
MRS. INCHBALD'S back)*

. . . 'He hath said in his heart, Tush, I shall never be cast down: there shall no harm happen unto me. . . . He lieth waiting secretly; even as a lion lurketh he in his den. — He doth ravish the poor: when he getteth him into his net.' . . .

MRS. INCHBALD

(rising)

There! Mrs. Inchbald. — And tell him, Mrs. Inchbald says, he ought to have a mirror *there*.

(Pointing to the wall, right.)

UPPIE

Mrs. Inchbald. — If you please, ma'am, I think Mr. Godwin sent a letter to a lady of that name, this morning before he went out.

MRS. INCHBALD

A note to me? How vexing! Waiting now at my lodgings, I suppose. — And then, — but you could n't know . . . Ah! (*Darts across the room at a pile of books set down, haphazard.*) 'A Simple Story'! (*Smiling benignly. Turning; she backs against a child's high-chair and gazes at it open-mouthed.*) What — in the name of pitiful Providence — is — that? Has — is — I never saw — *that* before. Tell me! — Has Mr. Godwin . . . *adopted* . . . s-s-some one?

UPPIE

(*with reserve*)

In a manner, I suppose you might say, ma'am.
(*They look at each other, MRS. INCHBALD baffled by UPPIE's taciturnity; UPPIE triumphant with reserve.*)

MRS. INCHBALD

(*agitated*)

And — wh-wh-wh-why did n't he ask m-me?

UPPIE

(puzzled, but hostile)

Ask you, ma'am? . . .

MRS. INCHBALD

I don't understand it . . . (*Reconsidering.*) I shall, doubtless, when I have my l-letter. (UPPIE *serenely removes the little chair from the foreground and sets it aside.* MRS. INCHBALD, *shaken for a moment, removes the nosegay from her bosom, and looks about for a vase; finding a bowl on the table, she puts the flowers in it.*) Poor, lonely creature! . . . I suppose (*to UPPIE*) he will educate it . . . according to his system. But you would n't know! . . . At any rate, it won't be able to answer back for a long time yet! Will it? (*Giving way to curiosity.*)

UPPIE

I should think not, madam.

MRS. INCHBALD

*(at a plunge)**How old . . . is the c-creature?*

UPPIE
(*frigidly*)

Three years, ma'am.

MRS. INCHBALD

And you take care of it? . . . Oh, it's *yours!* I see! — Oh, how absurd of me! I beg your pardon, really. (*Sits down suddenly, with relief; while UPPIE listens impassively to her laughter.*) How very nice. He must be dying of s-solitude. Wh-what a change.

(*In the doorway, appears SYMES, who stands inquiringly. MRS. INCHBALD rises; and stands still as she recognizes him. Her laughter dies.*)

SYMES

I beg your pardon. — Is this Number 29?

MRS. INCHBALD
(*advancing*)

Yes, it's 29. I was asking only now. But there's no one at home. Surely this is . . . Mr. S-S-Symes!

SYMES
(*bowing*)

Mrs. Inchbald.

MRS. INCHBALD

I remember you thoroughly. At Mr. Opie's we met you. Only last season. Mr. Opie's painting-room.

SYMES

You are more than kind, madam.

MRS. INCHBALD

Oh, I could n't forget that name. You'll pardon me, won't you, if I have to run away at once?
(They bow. Exit MRS. INCHBALD.)

SYMES

(to UPPIE)

I beg your pardon for walking in. Perhaps you don't know that the door is wide open. I intended to pay my respects to Mrs. Imlay; and I went to the address — quite near — which she once gave me. They told me that she had removed from her lodgings there to Number 29.
(UPPIE melts.) Is she — could I see her?

UPPIE

She's out at present, Sir; but I'm looking for her at any moment. They went out for a walk . . .

PORTRAIT OF MRS. W. 699

It's most unusual, Sir . . . You'll pardon the disorder. We've only been here a short time in this house; and I could n't set it all to rights at once.

SYMES

I feel that I'm intruding; I must n't do that. But she was so good as to bid me come . . . some day. Perhaps this is not the day.

UPPIE

(calling out of the window)

Now don't 'ee call to any strange cat, my dearie. Flowers is best. Be a good child now. — I beg pardon, Sir?

SYMES

I thought I saw behind the hedge . . . a little girl? Mrs. Imlay's little girl? — As I came by? Do you — do you think I might go down and speak with her awhile, — till Mrs. Imlay returns?

UPPIE

(beamingly)

Certainly, Sir! *(Calls out of the window.)* Here

700 P O R T R A I T O F M R S . W .

is a gentleman coming to talk to 'ee. Get up off the grass, darling. There's a daisy under the laburnum tree . . . You show it to him. He's never seen the like. (*To SYMES.*) The best way, Sir, is through the door at the back of the corridor downstairs. (*Showing him out, left upper door.*) There's the market-boy. (*Exit after him.*)

(*Enter, right, laughing, AMELIA ALDERSON and JOHN OPIE*)

AMELIA

She certainly wrote me, *Twenty-nine, The Polygon, Somers Town; after April 10th.*

OPIE

He said the same thing, precisely.

AMELIA

And straightway I come to see her in her new lodgings; and must needs encounter you; coming to quite the same place; coming to see quite a different person.

OPIE

No. Coming to see quite the same person I always come to see. Whenever I go out, it's

always you I go to see; and wherever I go; since ever we met. A monotonous programme for you, till we both die. Or till —

AMELIA

Or till I beg you begone; — and keep myself to that mind.

OPIE

But since we are met —

AMELIA

Agree with me, this time! It's certain that he loves her.

OPIE

Yes, I believe it. I used to think him the one man in the world who was made of pure Reason; no passion in him.

AMELIA

She has transformed him. And she herself — how happy she looks! I hardly dare to breathe upon them. — I believe it will all come true forever!

OPIE

I sent Tom before me, with the portrait. —

There it is. (*He goes to it and turns it face outwards. They stand before it.*) No, it has n't the hill-top look. — After all, would it be true to paint that, if one could? It can't happen every day. (*Enter together buoyantly from the corridor* GODWIN and MARY. *Her arms are full of flowers; she is laughing.*) A surprise for us!

MARY

Oh, the happy chance. — You here, together!

AMELIA

And you?

MARY

We, here together!

GODWIN

You see? — And, for once, before our working-hours are over.

(*He searches their faces happily. MARY puts her hand on his arm.*)

AMELIA

(*expectantly*)

Then you — new neighbors —

MARY

We 'neighbors' —

OPIE

At last —

AMELIA

It is — I mean — you are going to be — You
are —

MARY

We are.

AMELIA

Married!

GODWIN

Married, in brief!

MARY

Long ago.

OPIE

Married!

GODWIN

Magical word. (OPIE *shakes his hands joyfully.*)

AMELIA

(rapturously)

I saw it, from the first. . . . I don't know why I — I'm so astonished. . . . But after all you — he had written . . . though I knew he could n't believe it . . . and after all. . . . *When* were you married? And why did n't you tell your Amelia?

MARY

Ah, just the being married; you know what we think of the old-world's thought of that! What does that matter? And as for the true surprise — which we've had to ourselves this long time, were we not going to tell you in just another day, — just another! — Were we not going to tell you, just — Now?

GODWIN

I've written to our oldest friends these past few days; friends at a distance. . . . I wrote to Mrs. Inchbald only this morning.

AMELIA

And what about me?

MARY

I waited to tell you, dearest. I knew you were

coming. (*She sees the portrait.*) And here is my defender! (*Curtsies delightedly to the portrait.*) Do the honors now, Mary. — Say your thanks for the two of us. Say your thanks to Mr. Opie, for his faith . . . and gentleness. They'll never dare to call you Hyena any more, when once they see this; no, no!

AMELIA

Oh, Loveliest, what bliss to see you, in your home! . . . Go away, you learned gentlemen, and see that the house is right. I have such foolish things to say to her, for just this moment.

MARY

Show him the other rooms, William. — Ask his opinion; just for the sake of asking. And then — come back! (*The two men laughingly exeunt, by the upper left door. AMELIA and MARY kiss each other.*) And it is such news to you? I thought you saw.

AMELIA

But — you two to marry!

MARY

That delights you, does it?

AMELIA

What you can do for the world, now!

MARY

Yes, marriage is for sake of others; so it seems.
And so it seemed to us. But I am happy!

AMELIA

Happy? And Godwin is new-born! Only think; once upon a time, just before I met you, people said, — some people said, — that the Philosopher's eye was upon me; — *me*, and my harp; and my very neat slippers. Think of it! — And as surely as I come from Norwich, I've never set eyes on *this* William Godwin, never; I nor my harp, nor my very, very neat slippers.

MARY

Ah, you know whom you have to make happy. — Do so, dear! You can spend *all* your years together.

AMELIA

(*hovering over the table*)

Yes, that's so certain; it's the only hindrance. No suspense! . . . New tea-cups? But of course. Here's an old remnant. —

MARY

Cherish it! Many a time in those old days when I was so poor and shabby, I've offered my guests not only tea, but wine in those same tea-cups. And the very ones who marvelled at my shabbiness, were still glad to come and drink my tea, — and wine; — and welcome!

AMELIA

And now, some one is here to care for you, as you have cared for others. Some one is here to strip the briars off your every rose!

MARY

Ah . . . how I did long to do that, for women. Perhaps now —

AMELIA

You will do all that you have dreamed.

MARY

You are good to think that. Once, of course, people would say to me, 'When you have a home of your own, then you'll think no more of these wild projects for reforming the world.' — Reforming the world, Amelia! — Simply to desire

truth to be true; love to be love; thought to be thought; — for the poor; — for women and for men. Simply to desire the human to be human! — And while that passion burned in me, my own blood-kindred, — my mother, my brothers and sisters, — yes, and our father, too, our wretched abject father, — God forgive him, — were crying out to the hearing of my body, — for . . . husks. (Puts her hands over her ears.)

(Reënter UPPIE)

UPPIE

If you please, Mrs. Godwin, there's a gentleman to see you. He's in the garden, playing with Miss Fanny, ma'am. Shall I desire him up? His name is Symes; Mr. Symes.

MARY

Oh, yes, yes, yes! . . . I remember. And this is his first call. — Bring him in, most kindly, Uppie, please. — Stay here, Amelia. Help me to make him happy . . . about it. *(Exit UPPIE.)* . . . You are right. I must not think of those old days; nor of anything but Now. Godwin is transformed; and I am so happy. — You should see him with my Fanny. That was the first new

light upon him, that tenderness. He is a treasury of virtues that he does n't know. And if . . . if she ever has a brother —. Oh, some day, she must — (*laughing*) she *shall* have a brother! —

AMELIA

Yes, dear, I can imagine.

MARY

Do! —

(*Interrupts herself with a sharp gesture, at a sudden sound of street music. — A violin, with a harp, plays a strain of 'Drink to me only with thine eyes.'*)

AMELIA

(*with pleasure*)

'*Drink to me only*'! (*Runs to the window.*)

MARY

We have more singers in the street here. — Oh, William! — William has stopped him. (*The music stops.*) — And I've heard him before. His voice is sweet, truly. (*Looking out of the window, as AMELIA turns back.*) And he's blind. Did you see that? He's blind. . . . Gone away. —

710 PORTRAIT OF MRS. W.

(Enter SYMES, up left. He looks at once towards MARY, and stands silent, smiling. She comes towards him, with outstretched hand.)

MARY

This is a pleasure, Mr. Symes! You were good to remember my invitation. How long ago it seems! Did it take you so long to screw up your courage, and come?

SYMES

(whose manner is larger and more dignified than it was, but still simple and direct)

Yes. — Miss Alderson. *(Bowing.)*

AMELIA

And how comes it, you know this new dwelling as soon as I?

SYMES

I went to the address near by which your Champion had given me that afternoon at Mr. Opie's; and I was told that she no longer lived there. And even as I considered the way, a messenger appeared . . . a heavenly visitant in dis-

guise; with — what think you, ladies? — in his very hands? — The Portrait. (*Points it out.*)

MARY

(*bowing to herself gaily*)

Well done, again!

SYMES

I followed. — I even walked in. The door was open.

AMELIA

(*animatedly*)

What then! the portrait led you directly to the new home of Mrs. William Godwin? What a fairy-tale! (*SYMES is visibly startled.*)

SYMES

I — I beg your pardon?

AMELIA

Did n't you know? You had n't heard? Why, no, of course.

SYMES

Mrs. . . . Godwin?

(*He looks at MARY, who regards him with friendly benignity.*)

AMELIA

(in impulsive distress)

He does n't know! (*Hastily*) How stupid of me! Of course you could n't know. *I* did n't know; — not really *know*, you know, until a little while ago. — How silly of me! Really, I —

MARY

Very well announced, Amelia, I think. —

AMELIA

Will you excuse me? I'm coming back. — I left — I left — something or other — downstairs. (*To MARY*) Where are they? Oh. — For a moment! *(Exit.)*

SYMES

(who has recovered himself, and speaks with the calm and friendliness of an older man)

Will you pardon me?

MARY

Pardon?

SYMES

This ignorant intrusion. — I had not even heard of your . . . removal to a new home.

MARY

Please think no more of it. Indeed, indeed, I should so like to tell you. — You must be puzzled. You had heard certain opinions of mine: — and much distorted; as they have always been. Then, too, you had heard something of my personal history; for that I told you myself. And now; if you are wonder-struck that I seem to have thrown away the beliefs that I . . . that I have suffered for, — how should I blame you? Pray, stay awhile.

SYMES

You are willing?

MARY

I desire it; with all my heart. (*They sit.*) I saw that day at Mr. Opie's — I could not help seeing — that the facts of my story pained you; when I insisted upon them. I never willingly concealed them, you know. But only to truth-loving minds would I ever explain. I believe that you are one. I look upon you as a friend. A friend: almost as the Americans call our Quakers, — Friend.

SYMES

That would be to me an order of knighthood (*smiling*) in my obscurity.

MARY

Then let us be friends; and understand what we can, as we live on. — I begin to see that all my ideas of human life were gloomy and foreboding. From my childhood they were dark, save for one hope; my hope (*smiling*) that I should find some path out, when I grew older; that I should be a slayer of dragons; the dragons that I knew! Only the brutal look of marriage — as it is on this Island — had I ever seen closely. My own mother's life was one long blasphemy of womanhood. And my sister married — to escape from Home! — How could it all do anything but warp my wits? Until all the poor helpless parasites I saw, with no livelihood, no work, no life, they thought, unless they Married! — How could they seem different in any wise from the world's accursed, who have always sold their minds and bodies? How could they, . . . Friend?

SYMES

I see.

MARY

I was fevered, perhaps, — with knowledge of this home-life that was ours. I was beside myself with hardships that were not mine to tell of. All my hopes of fellowship were beyond my youth; they were with the men and women, — the few men and women who see; the few who were eager, as I am eager, to help solve the dark tyrannies of the world. — Light and liberty for all: — the hope of the New World; the dream of France; the dream of all human nature that is really human! — And disgust with the false, had taken away the God from men: most men. But not from me! Those of us who kept our God, knew that whatever He is, He knows the heart of men! And who else was there to serve? So: when I went to France, and met there . . . a man — from the new world of America — (*she speaks slowly but serenely, from a new knowledge of happiness*) and the Terror threw us together, with the clinging of creatures on a lone island in a sea of horror; — there was no State; there was no Church; there was *nothing left*; but the human heart, and the faith still burning! A proud faith, in a New World, for all to build; men, and women. — And as to marriage; There were

a hundred paltry complications; dangers that name and nation made, among a maddened people. — What did that matter to me? — God knew my heart. . . . I thought that I knew . . . his. I thought it a folly . . . and a wrong, then, to vow anything. But I believed . . . that Love must live forever.

SYMES

Perhaps it does.

MARY

But I . . . died. — No matter. You know the ending of that story. It left me with a bitter wisdom.

SYMES

All bitter?

MARY

No. . . . No. My little girl . . . my revelation. And now — Mr. Godwin . . . whose philosophy may seem to you cold.

SYMES

But I shall always be an obscure person!

MARY

(looking at him wistfully, like a child at bay)

He is so tender . . . with her. — I was deceived in him when we first met, I think. And he — *(laughing)* he saw that I talk too much!

SYMES

(cheerfully)

And you are married. . . .

MARY

Married: yes. — But it is only now that we've made it known. . . . Oh, yes, it took much thought; the *words* for it all so seldom say what one means. That is hard, friend, for those who would rebuild the world, — and who desire to say only what they mean: no syllable untrue. But if only I can still fight for the Cause, in this same bewildering, war-stained world; and among these people who go on living still as if no struggle had ever been. — Even the Americans seem to have forgotten.

SYMES

You will live for it — write for it —

MARY

And you will come now, often?

SYMES

You are too kind. I — I have to return to the country very shortly . . . But perhaps I . . . later . . . in the Autumn.

MARY

Oh, we are not such birds of passage. We shall be here. Be sure you come in the Autumn.

SYMES

Had I but known, I would have brought some good omen with me. (*He looks at her intently.*)

MARY

(*wistfully*)

I hope I have not . . . hurt your belief in me.

SYMES

How so?

MARY

My . . . my inconsistency. I sometimes think we are like rose-vines. We need a sustaining

trellis of admiration, to grow on. . . . Since that brief boldness, when I pushed away all my . . . trellis, — I've been — at times — dismayed.

SYMES

You put in my mind a childlike thought — of God: — as Love that lasts forever. . . .

(He kisses her hand, serenely, and goes out, right. GODWIN, AMELIA and OPIE re-enter, left.)

AMELIA

Well, has he really gone? The poor too-late man?

MARY

(turning)

Do you know, he said something just now. About God, it was. He called God . . . Love that lasts forever. . . . *(OPIE looks at AMELIA.)*

GODWIN

That is a figure of speech, my dearest. . . . Attractive, certainly.

MARY

(laughing, on second thought)

Oh, William, William Godwin! — And while I

think of it, *Dearest!* How could you stop our singer in the street? Never, never again!

GODWIN

You like him, love? I had n't heard a thing. I thought you would n't wish it.

MARY

He's one of the charms of this neighborhood: does n't he pass your study? (GODWIN *shakes his head.*) And the violin is always nicely in tune; and he's apt to sing '*Drink to me only*' . . . And if you'd only waited, his voice is very sweet. And above all things, Darling, — he is blind. —

GODWIN

Not a better musician for that, my dear, strictly speaking. (*With sudden compunction.*) Blind? — So is Love; the old wives say. And so was I. Forgive me.

(MARY *leaves him to devote herself to OPIE.*

They stand together, considering the portrait, for a moment. Then she moves with OPIE slowly about the room, stopping to consult him about the placing of various objects. AMELIA points majestically to the hour-glass on the table.)

AMELIA

What is that?

GODWIN

An hour-glass, Miss Alderson.

AMELIA

Of course I know an hour-glass when I see one. But what is it doing here? That dour reminder, like a skeleton at the feast. This is no place for measuring hours of time, you incorrigible sage. It should go back to your study. — Unless you move your study home, — here?

GODWIN

It is a trivial detail, perhaps. But it belongs to a habit I have, of exactitude and curiosity. Most of my day has been spent and always will be spent, doubtless, in my Study. But now and again, I like to know how much time I've given to desultory reading, or, perhaps, to letter-writing: without watching the time too closely. As to my Study, I still keep my rooms at Evesham. It is not far off, you see; and I—we—have always been of the opinion that the fondest souls can, by perpetual association, dull their fondness for each other . . . this opinion, of

course, without experience. — But it would be too precious a risk. It is one of the minor reasons why Marriage is such a mistake. — *Has been . . .* such a mistake (*looking across at MARY*) . . . or, let me say, has . . . often been such a . . . grievous mistake. *We* shall never risk dulling the northern lights of ever-fresh admiration with that indifference. What we possess without intermission, we inevitably hold light. Separation is the image of death; but it is Death stripped of all that is most tremendous, and his dart purged of its deadly venom. I always thought St. Paul's rule, that we should die daily, an exquisite maxim. (*Serenely.*) The practice of it would give to life a double relish. — Thus in my own Study, a few streets away, if I am seized with a sudden desire to know what Mary is doing at that moment, — if I long to see her; if I picture her listless, biting her pen, gazing on space, — if I am tempted to throw aside my work like a school-boy and run home to know if *she* is wondering if *I* am wondering what *she* is doing, — shall I yield to that temptation?

AMELIA

I hope so!

GODWIN

But no, dear Amelia. That is no way to help the world.

AMELIA

It might help Mary. — Think of her — her history.

GODWIN

(amiably)

No. — We are agreed together to submit our impulses to reflection. To act, after reflection, is a very different matter. The impulses crowd and throng. And what a subtle tribute to Mary, — to that exquisite enjoyment which she alone — I beg your pardon, Amelia, but you know it is true — which she alone knows how to draw from the smallest circumstance, — that my thoughts veer so often, to herward! Only to her, *(ardently)* though I do not follow them. This morning, I made an exception.

AMELIA

How many doors away?

GODWIN

Only some twenty.

AMELIA

Twenty doors! . . . A door is a dreadful thing. Two walls — *side-walls* — to a house. That makes forty side-walls, does n't it? . . . Forty walls! And for a human soul to search Love through all the world . . . and then . . . find it! — And then build forty walls!

GODWIN

We did not build them, Amelia.

AMELIA

(*severely*)

And what if you died? That thing (*pointing to the hour-glass*) reminds me.

(*Turns it upside-down, then re-turns it; then takes it away and sets it on the dresser.*)

GODWIN

(*serenely*)

I *shall* die, some day. And that will end it all; all our impulses and our disciplines. But this is Now.

AMELIA

May Mary brighten your creed, friend Godwin.

This is not bridal talk; nor thinking. You are always so much gentler than your beliefs. In fact you never practise what you preach. Heaven help your poor disciples!

GODWIN

There you touch me to the quick. Will my friends take me for a renegade?

AMELIA

You?

GODWIN

That we — who have taught and spoken against this hypocritic tyranny of Marriage — should be married?

AMELIA

Mary never taught anything against marriage . . . (*thoughtfully.*) But you . . . well, can't you change your mind? What is a philosopher? Is he a barnacle? (*indignantly.*) . . . Wait a moment! (*Runs to the book-case.*) . . . Oh, I know where to find you. I often asked myself, could it be true? . . . (*She extracts a book, and waves it towards OPIE and MARY who come down smil-*

ingly. *She finds the place, and declaims, running her finger from place to place. OPIE, too, plucks a book out.*) Here! 'Political Justice' . . . Page . . . ah, here it is. — 'The institution of marriage is a system of fraud!' . . . (*They all laugh at GODWIN's smiling abashment.*) 'We ought to dismiss our mistake as soon as it is detected . . . but we are taught to cherish it.' . . . 'Marriage, as now understood, is a Monopoly, and the Worst of Monopolies.'

GODWIN }
 MARY }
 (*triumphantly*)

'*As now understood*'!

AMELIA

'The abolition of marriage, in the form now practised, will be attended with no evils.'

GODWIN
 (*serenely*)

'In the form now practised.' There I have you. (*Enter UPPIE with a note, also a mail-bag.*) What is it, Uppie?

UPPIE

A boy with a letter, Sir. — And the mail-bag at the same time. The boy was sudden, Sir. Will there be an answer?

(MARY *takes the letter and gives it to GODWIN after a glance.*)

MARY

For you, dear . . . From Mrs. Inchbald.

UPPIE

That was the name, ma'am, . . . the lady who called here, earlier.

MARY

(*reassured*)

She came here? Oh, then all's well.

GODWIN

(*to OPIE*)

I sent her a note this morning, myself; announcing our marriage . . . (*To MARY*) Open it, my love.

MARY

Read it, you. I'm not afraid . . . not *very* much afraid.

(GODWIN, *with an effort, opens it and shows*

some vexation as he reads. MARY takes it as he hands it to her; and reads it with blank dismay. Silence grows. She hands it to AMELIA, who reads, first with indignation.)

AMELIA

How odd! . . . But then. How are we reading it? In the expectation of something witty and . . . and not too kind . . . After all . . . (*Reads, in a very cordial voice, hurrying over its ungracious doubleness.*) 'I most sincerely wish you and Mrs. Godwin joy. . . . But, assured that your joyfulness would obliterate from your memory every trifling engagement . . . Trifling engagement, I have entreated . . . I have entreated another person to supply your place; — and perform your office in securing a box. If I have done wrong, when you next marry, I will act differently,' . . .

(Thrusts it into OPIE's hand and sits on end of sofa, wiping her eyes under her drooping hat.)

OPIE

(shaking his head)

Miss Alderson, as an imitation of Mrs. Inch-

bald . . . you are seriously unsuccessful. (*Reads coldly after making a preliminary face.*) 'I most sincerely wish you and Mrs. Godwin joy. But, assured that your joyfulness would obliterate from your memory every trifling engagement, I have entreated another person to supply your place. . . . If I have done wrong, when you next marry, I will act differently.' . . .

(*They all look at MARY, who shakes her head, hopelessly . . . then they look at one another.*)

GODWIN

Give it not a thought, my love. She's such an old friend.

MARY

Of yours.

GODWIN

She is grieved, plainly, that we . . . that we did not tell her sooner.

MARY

But — after that — of course I must not go.

UPPIE

I beg pardon, ma'am. The same lady left the

nosegay on the table. . . . I set it in water, at once.

(She goes to the table, and skilfully abstracts the note under her apron. Exit UPPIE with boughs that MARY had brought in, covering all.)

MARY

(comforted)

Oh, how nice of her! . . . Rather unusual, don't you think? From her to me?

OPIE

(briefly)

Yes, for Mrs. Inchbald. — We must go, now, and leave you to your mail-bag.

AMELIA

Yes, indeed. — You see, after all, 't was playful.

OPIE

Thoroughly playful. — That proves it.

(Pointing to the nosegay.)

MARY

Please stay, and share our tea!

AMELIA

Never, never! That is, not to-day. A little later, I shall come; just to see how a great literary light keeps her home. But never to-day. — Come, Mr. John Opie. Away with us!

(They part affectionately in the doorway.

Exeunt AMELIA and OPIE. GODWIN opens the mail-bag, sitting down on the long Empire sofa. — MARY perches on the arm of it and looks over his shoulder.)

GODWIN

From my mother — God bless her! . . . To use a popular phrase. You can't help loving her when you meet. . . . 'Your broken resolution in regard to matrimony encourages me to hope that you will ere long embrace the Gospel, and not only you but your other half, whose souls should be both one, as Watts says, the sooner the better. . . . My dears, whatever you do, do not make invitations and entertainments. Live comfortable with one another. The heart of her husband safely trusts in her. I cannot give you better advice than out of Proverbs, the Prophets, and New Testament. My best affections attend you both. — From your Mother.' —

(MARY *delves after another letter and listens with growing cheer, as he reads it, pointedly, to her.*)

MARY

From Mr. Holcroft . . .

GODWIN

‘From my very heart and soul I give you joy.’
(*Holds it under her eyes.*) Those words; do you see, unbeliever? ‘I think you the most extraordinary married pair in existence. . . . I hope and expect to see you — both — and very soon. If you show coldness or refuse me, you will do injustice to a heart which, since it has really known you, never for a moment felt cold to you.’ . . .

MARY

(*reading*)

‘I cannot be mistaken concerning the woman you have married’ . . . Did you leave out my name? — ‘It is Mrs. W.’ . . . (*She looks at him, troubled.*) ‘Your secrecy a little pains me. . . . It tells me you do not yet know me. — Pray inform me, sweet lady, in what state is your novel?’

And on what, courteous sir, are you employed?
 . . . Holcroft!' (*She delves after another letter.*)
 Your own familiar, Mr. Tuthill. — (GODWIN
hesitates.) Come, read it. Let us take the worst.
 He agreed with you about marriage, once . . .

GODWIN

(*reading dispassionately*)

'I feel very much gratified at finding myself
 numbered with those who had engaged Mrs.
 Godwin's particular esteem and should rejoice
 to pay honest tribute. But if there be men who
 appear to me to violate those principles which
 they profess they hold sacred, I cannot imitate
 them.' . . . The rest is mere argument, my love.

MARY

(*dazedly*)

I suppose . . . the world cannot turn new in a
 day. . . . (*She feels her way, up, brokenly towards
 the doorway. She strives for speech an instant.*)
 Uppie, Uppie! (UPPIE *appears.*) . . . Fanny's
 supper-time. . . . She shall have strawberries
 too; because it is a festival . . . And bring some
 honey. — I'll set her table, here. (*Exit UPPIE.*
 MARY *looks out of the window and waves her hand*

tenderly to FANNY, below, while GODWIN sits looking before him. She turns back more cheerfully, gathering animation as she sets forth the high-chair, and clears away from the table towards the centre, various superfluous objects.) Fanny's state-supper; with two parents to wait upon her. Come!

(She inspects a silver mug critically, and places it, with a porringer. — GODWIN rises, and smilingly examines the silver on the dresser.)

GODWIN

What a child you are! Who'd dream it?

MARY

And you, friend Godwin, that you dance attendance here, with knife and fork and spoon! — Oh, let's make-believe that Fanny is yours; all yours; all yours. No; that is not what I mean. She's all mine. She is just a little, stray child of God . . . for us to make divinely happy.

GODWIN

A figure of speech, my dear. —

MARY

Let's be Roman, then, and pray to our Lares before each meal. And Fanny shall descend upon us, and eat benignly of your gifts and offerings. (*He kisses her outstretched hand. . . . She breaks out:*) Oh, kiss my hand again; just my hand. I don't know why; but I think it soothes my hurted feelings. (*With feverish gaiety.*) It's good for broken wings. Nothing else is good for broken wings. Only constant deference . . . and kisses on her hands. — (*Looking about her.*) The household gods! . . . Ah, don't we understand now? The reason why the poor people in this poor world will cheapen and dull their domesticity? They don't bid in the gods! . . . They stuff them away in churches for once-a-week. But we know better! We'll work; and fast: and pray the gods to come, and sit at meat with us. — And I shall be a Champion again. — (*Runs to the window and calls out.*) Come up, now, darling, come! — (*Comes away from the window; and looks poignantly at GODWIN, who is sitting down, right, looking at his handful of letters.*) William . . . (*Her voice is tremulous. He looks at her instantly. As she stands still, searching his face with keen wistful-*

ness, he rises, as if to cross to her. She puts out her hand against his impulse.) No. — Not yet. . . . Let me look at you a moment. ‘*After due reflection.*’

(*Unsmilingly for a long pause, almost of awe, they look at each other with faces that reflect thought, humor, deepest query. Then GODWIN, smiling, holds his arms wide, without stirring: MARY, with a sudden outburst of childlike feeling, runs across the room into them.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

Autumn.

The same room, somewhat altered in appearance.

The casement windows are closed. There is no portrait there, and no table towards the centre. The long sofa stands left, down, slanted towards the wall: and before it, a covered cradle. Up by the window sits UPPIE, reading through her spectacles. — She holds a Bible open before her and moves her finger along, conscientiously, prompting her memory in a sonorous chanting voice; trying the hard words with some difficulty, but final satisfaction.

UPPIE

‘My soul also is sore troubled: . . . but . . . how long wilt thou punish me?’. . . Five. ‘For in death no man remembereth thee: and who will give thee thanks in the pit?’ Six. ‘I am weary of my groaning: every night wash I my bed: and water my couch with my tears.’ Seven. — ‘My beauty is gone for very trouble; and worn away because of mine enemies.’ (*Wipes her eye-glasses, and slowly turns a few pages.*) ‘The tabernacles

of the Edomites, and the Ishmaelites: the . . . Moab-ites . . . and the . . . Hagar-enes . . . Hagar-enes.'

(A sound of men's voices. She lifts her head; places her eye-glasses in the book and rises. The double-door to the left opens and DR. FORDYCE and MR. CARLISLE enter quietly, followed by WILLIAM GODWIN, pale and tense. They close the door. GODWIN looks fixedly at their faces. FORDYCE turns, and pats his arm almost tenderly.)

FORDYCE

Give yourself an hour of ease, Mr. Godwin. It is a most encouraging appearance. And . . . I may add this quite truthfully, encouraging for the first time.

CARLISLE

Not one woman in a thousand — ten thousand, — could have rallied so, I believe; after (*with a glance at FORDYCE*) — after these three days. . . . Compose yourself. You owe it to her.

GODWIN

(after a pause)

Gentlemen, on your word of honor; dare I leave

her . . . for an hour? Don't torture me with false hope. . . . I have been schooling myself to meet . . . the worst; — as far as . . . the mind can gather its forces together. Do not encourage me to hope.

CARLISLE

Mr. Godwin, I feel with Mr. Fordyce here, and with you, that it would be the height of cruelty to delude you. You know, for yourself, what a struggle we have seen, with forces beyond us all. But she is sustained, miraculously, one might be tempted to say. The babe (*glancing towards the cradle*), as we have seen, is now in a highly satisfying condition.

FORDYCE

Oh, quite satisfactory.

CARLISLE

There has been no chill for two days. . . .

GODWIN

(*brightening feverishly*)

Yes, yes, that is true. That I had forgotten.

(*A knock at the door, right. UPPIE goes to*

open it. The three men stand as if charmed, waiting. Enter TOM with an armful of flowers and a note. — GODWIN rouses himself to take them.)

TOM

From Mr. Opie, Sir. — Desires his compliments . . . and begs to know how . . . how is your Lady since yesterday, Sir.

GODWIN

Thank you, Tom, thank you. . . . Better, we think; — we almost dare to think. I . . . I will take him that answer myself. . . . A breath of air. Yes, I will go out for a little. Dr. Fordyce here, — and Mr. Carlisle, tell me I may do so; — I *should* do so. (*He looks at them closely again. They nod assent.*) Thank you, gentlemen. I will meet you below . . . in a moment.

(*They bow and go out*)

TOM

I was to stay, Sir, if there could be any use of me.

(*GODWIN looks vaguely at him; then refers to OPIE'S note, still in his hand, and nods his head slowly.*)

GODWIN

Uppie. . . . (UPPIE *draws nearer.*) Things are more hopeful, Uppie. — Mrs. Fenwick has gone to her own home for a few hours. Mr. Montague is still resting, downstairs, in the drawing-room. I have begged him to sleep awhile. If any one calls, that person must be spoken with at the door, or up here. But on no account wake Mr. Montague. He has watched with me three nights. Yes, Uppie; they say your mistress is recovering. Yes, yes.

UPPIE

The Lord be praised for that. — If it is indeed so . . . Sir.

GODWIN

(*more warmly*)

I am sure you share our . . . gratification . . . our anxious hope.

UPPIE

The Lord's will be done, Sir; if it comes to that.

GODWIN

(*uncertainly*)

Elizabeth, your good intentions are not to be

doubted. But in one respect, my confidence in you . . . is tempted to waver.

UPPIE
(*dismayed*)

Sir?

GODWIN

I feel a certain un-ease; lest you should feel yourself drawn to speak to Mary . . . to my wife . . . to your mistress. . . . In brief, lest you should make some opportunity of her weakness in this hour of emergency, to broach to her your own — er — religious convictions.

UPPIE

I, Sir? . . . Reproach her, Sir?

GODWIN
(*nervously*)

Broach, broach, — suggest — converse — heavens!

UPPIE

Talk to her, Sir? — About . . . dying, Sir?

GODWIN
(*distraught*)

Be quiet, woman! . . . I mean — It would be

very natural to *you*. — Remember the temptation you gave way to, in your natural distress. And remember — it is my Command — she is not, in my absence, to be disturbed with a word of Cant! — (*Moderating his indignation.*) I mean, with *anything* ordinarily to be stigmatized — I would say *characterized* as ‘Religious.’

UPPIE

No. Cant from me, Sir! — And if she do be better —

GODWIN

(*severely*)

There is no need at any time. Your mistress’s . . . religion . . . is a matter of her daily life and character; in all her days. . . . It has nothing to do with super — with fear or weakness. She is stronger than all of us. — Do you follow me, Uppie?

UPPIE

No, Sir. — But when your lady is well again, Sir, *she*’ll explain it to me.

GODWIN

(*going, and turning back*)

And here is Tom, Mr. Opie’s boy. (Tom, *who*

has just seen the cradle is staring at it open-mouthed.) You know him. . . . Let him lend a hand, till I return. — Yes, Tom, we are doing very well. — I was going to see Opie myself; was I not? That was it. — God bless you, Tom. — To use a vulgar expression. —

(Reënter, right, MR. CARLISLE. He sees GODWIN'S shattered state of mind, and takes him by the arm, gently.)

CARLISLE

Come, Mr. Godwin. A walk will do you worlds of good. I'll meet you below. *(Puts him out of the door, right, and turns back to UPPIE.)* Remember; it is best that you all take what rest you can, after this strain. Our patient is worried, to-day, over the care you are taking. Don't let her know of the body-guard in the house. . . . Above all, boy, don't wake the baby! *(Exit.)*

UPPIE

(to TOM, tartly)

Did you never see a cradle before, Boy?

TOM

Not since I'm living with Mr. Opie. . . . Us had un at home; always. . . . So that's what it is.

UPPIE

What It is! . . . And a beautiful dove, too. A perfect young Lady. More than one week old. Not like her mother, as I can see. Fair hair and blue eyes. . . . But we never can know what we will be.

(Vaguely cerebrating after OPHELIA. Motions for silence suddenly, listening towards the bedroom door.)

MARY'S voice
(within)

Uppie . . . Uppie . . .

(UPPIE hastily goes into the bedroom, and returns in a moment, holding the doors shut behind her, and communing with herself, to TOM's open-mouthed agitation.)

UPPIE

'They run to and fro, and are at their wits' end.'
. . . Wait . . . let me think. . . . Are the doctors gone?

TOM

Yes'm.

UPPIE

'They mount up to heaven, they go down again to

the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble.
 . . . The sunlight is here. She wants to be out of that room. I must take it on myself. . . . And I will. She's that much heartier to-day. . . . Thank God. (*She opens the door.*) Thank God! (*More loudly.*)

MARY'S voice

Why, is that Tom? . . . Opie's Tom? . . .

UPPIE

(*on the threshold*)

Don't be calling, my dearie. Yes, it is Tom; and he will help us. — I am coming.

(*She reënters with an armful of pillows, moves the sofa a bit and opens a screen behind it to keep off any draught. TOM follows her, awe-struck, to the bedchamber.*

They return carrying MARY on their crossed hands. Her arms are round their necks, and she is smiling faintly. Her hair is loosely tied in her neck, in girlish fashion; she is wrapped in a bed-gown of pale color. They lay her with great care against the cushions of the sofa, her back towards her bedroom door; and spread a coverlet over her.)

MARY

(smiling back at them as one refreshed)

How good to be here again . . . out of that room! . . . And roses . . . Who sent them?

UPPIE

Roses everywhere, — upstairs and down. Mr. Opie sent these. . . You could not have so many in your own room, dear. *(As if she were talking to a child.)* You shall rest awhile with these, quite by yourself and no one else. *(Looking at Tom.)* And there's the sun. . .

MARY

And . . . and is there any message from Amelia?

UPPIE

The poor lamb is in Norwich. She does n't know you've been sore ill.

MARY

Mrs. Inchbald? . . . But . . . no. — Mrs. Sidons? . . .

UPPIE

No more words, my dearie. Sleep, if you can. Sleep, now.

MARY

*(pointing to the cradle)*Oh, she is here? *(Eagerly.)*

UPPIE

Don't go on about her, dearie, or I shall have to take her away again.

MARY

No, no! — Oh, not while we are so quiet. Let me have her nearer. . . . We'll both sleep, then . . . maybe. — I'll be good. *(They move the cradle near her; and lift the veil from it: she looks.)* Fast asleep. . . .

(Waves her hand: and nestles back obediently. Her eyes close. UPPIE looks at her closely; then signs to TOM and touches her lips. She whispers in TOM's ear and points to corridor-door, right. Exit TOM. UPPIE withdraws by the upper door, left. MARY opens her eyes, and, turning her head with little motion, sees that she is alone. She reaches out and stirs the cradle very softly; gathers strength, parts the curtains, and reaches her outstretched hand within; showing her great weakness.)

MARY

(as if she expected an answer)

My girl-child? . . . I believe we are defeated, after all. — Defeat. . . This heaviness . . . this is defeat. . . My girl-child . . . what will you be? . . . Something solitary? Be Something for us . . . be something . . . steadfast. . .

(Reënter UPPIE, watchfully)

UPPIE

Dearie, what is this talking?

MARY

I'm talking to my daughter, Uppie.

UPPIE

But you must n't be talking to your daughter. Let me take her with me. She's sleeping soundly. Yes, I'll move her into the next room. . . . Do you rest quiet now.

(She moves out the little cradle, left; returns, pours out a glass of wine and gives it to MARY, who drinks a mouthful with listless obedience; then reaches her arms out, as far as she can, towards the windows.)

MARY

(a little troubled)

I cannot dip my hands in the sun. — The days are grown much shorter, Uppie.

(Her eyes close again.)

UPPIE

It's September, you see, my dearie: — ma'am. — Mid-September, autumn like. I'll open one. . . .

(Goes to the window. Pauses, with her hand on the casement, and looks out with interest. — Thrusts her head out and concentrates her gaze on some one below. — Looks back at MARY who does not notice her. — Listens a moment: — then moves towards the door, right, just as TOM opens it from outside.)

TOM

(on the threshold, to UPPIE)

What be I to do? . . . It's a gentleman wants to see her . . . Mrs. Godwin . . . that's all he said. 'I've come to see Mrs. Godwin.' . . . Looks to be a kind of clergyman . . . Dissenting; by his Hat. . . . Something like a Quaker, you might call it.

UPPIE

(with solemn triumph)

The Lord be praised! A man of God. . . . 'T is His own doing; and none of mine. Bid him come in, softly; not to wake Mr. Montague there in the drawing-room. — Bid him come up. — Don't 'ee be giving this word to any other living creature. (*Exit TOM.*) Some one must have sent for him. A man of God.

(Settles MARY'S coverlet; sets a chair facing her, towards the centre of the room. — Advances towards the corridor-door as SYMES enters. He halts, once inside the room, and listens in evident bewilderment as she speaks to him, with an eager respect, looking intently at him. His dress is markedly severe; he turns — with some nervousness — a Quaker hat in his hands.)

UPPIE

(softly)

Will it please you step in, Sir. . . . I'm sure she will be very much cheered to see you, Sir; very much cheered.

(With some agitation, she moves the chair towards him, and then hurriedly makes her exit up, closing the door after her.)

MARY, startled by the sudden action of all this, opens her eyes widely. As she recognizes SYMES, she sits higher against the cushions; and a moment's shock of surprise comes into her face.

SYMES' eyes rest upon her; and a similar shock comes into his own fixed gaze: — amazement, realization, grief. — A look of humility comes over MARY; she sinks back against the cushions, and spreads her hands out with a gesture of meekness, looking back at him. When she speaks, it is with a strain of stoicism and growing strength in her voice.

SYMES makes a sudden movement towards her, convention melting under the stress of his feeling.)

SYMES

(almost indignantly)

What does this mean?

MARY

(shaking her head slowly)

Mr. Symes. — Do not be disturbed.

SYMES

I was told to come upstairs. . . . I had no idea of

this. . . . Can you forgive it? You are ill. —
No one told me.

MARY
(*smiling*)

They thought the whole world must know . . .
the whole of our little distress. . . . Perhaps . . .
my Uppie . . . thought. . . .

SYMES

Shall I call her?

MARY
(*more firmly*)

No. — I see now, what she thought. . . . I beg
you, stay. . . . You have taken orders, Mr.
Symes?

SYMES
(*looking vaguely at his hat*)

No . . . not exactly. — But (*with passionate concern*) . . . I can see you have been very ill.
(*He approaches and sits down near her.*)

MARY

Yes . . . Let us talk together a little. Words of
understanding, — are they not the most pre-

cious of all ministrations? She took you (*smiling*) for a man of some Church; and it seemed well to her that you should be here. . . . Do not let that distress you. For I wish to talk. — And how strangely we seem to meet, at long intervals; and at moments that make us see, in the midst of noise, or of stillness, — how fast the Earth is journeying round the Sun. . . . (*He looks back at her immovably, rapt in her face and her words.*) I think there is a destiny in it. For the first time, to-day, I have been left alone. (*She looks towards the table: he rises, pours out more wine and brings it to her. She drinks of it, like a child, and he sets back the glass and sits again, still watching her.*) Pray be at ease. I have come back but newly from the doors . . . of birth and death. Should not that make us simple? And one can look both ways, for a time . . . (*Laughs faintly.*) The doors are both . . . open. (*SYMES puts by his hat on the table; and stands, looking back at her.*) . . . I thought . . . the Friends . . . as the Americans call them, did not take off their hats to monarchs or to magistrates, friend Symes; or yet to women.

(*He resumes his seat, smiling. Youth emerges from his formal manner, as her spell lays*

hold of him. But he listens always with passionate intentness and a certain strength of cheer, regardless of her feebleness.)

SYMES

I am not yet a Quaker; but always a Friend, Mary Wollstonecraft. You gave me that title. I have been trying to widen my mind to hold the meaning it might have. So, with your help, I am finding . . . my religion.

MARY

My help? Oh, say all. You strengthen me, more than that wine.

(She pushes herself higher against the pillows.)

SYMES

Ought I to speak with you? You are too gentle to say Go. . . . And yet, I know, you lover of the truth, — and so compassionate, you must be happier . . . for words spoken from that brink of birth and . . . God forbid it —

MARY

(tranquilly)

Death.

SYMES

Dare I ask —

MARY

My child is living. . . . She is well.

SYMES

(simply)

I have never come so near to these mysteries.

MARY

Nor I . . . before. These depths, friend, that I know now, have taken me to the uttermost, under the world. — Why do I talk so to you? . . . I know.

SYMES

Because we are almost strangers. No. . . . You are the friend I meet only on the edge of a cloud; where searchers find out simpleness and things abiding; where there is neither ‘marrying nor giving in marriage’. . . *(smiling wanly)*.

MARY

(smiling back with sudden confidence)

It is so. — And neighbor, I may not ask them

here, — I've tried their souls so far — with all this watching. . . . Is this Defeat?

SYMES
(*warmly*)

Defeat?

MARY

This irony: — that I, who tried to burn my own heart as a little rush-light for the truth, — that I must go out . . . empty-handed, and that light . . . despised?

SYMES

Despised?

MARY

And leave all undone; again, again: blank. — For those little unknowing, helpless hands of my child? And I cannot even tell her, poor newborn, the bitter wisdom from my simpleness! . . . It's all so simple. . . . He does not yet know that.

SYMES

He?

MARY
(*simply*)

Godwin. . . . So tender, now. Yet he knows

nothing of the source of that tenderness. Oh, if one rose from the dead, yet would he not believe. It is too simple! — But hearken, you new friend. I'm thankful for the more that I have learned. I tried, you see, to fill my little life with what I thought full measure of truth and love. . . . But when we call on truth, it over-runs, — it over-fills, — it overwhelms; it is so much greater than we understand. It poured on me; and I was only human. — As I told you once, I plunged to the very deep . . . of despair. I thought that was death.

SYMES

Do not think of that.

MARY

Out of that pitiful life, I died, truly. . . . But when I crept about again, a humbler spirit, I was much younger; and meeker; more a little child.

SYMES

(*gently*)

Strange hero; always with the heart of a child for innocence of this terrible world. . . .

MARY

(shaking her head slowly)

Even the New World, as we called it once . . . is no new world. — This is my trouble. Keep it for me, friend. You know when people . . . are ill and . . . very weak, sometimes they say true things, much truer; and the others think it is only their weakness speaking. . . . Will he think that? — Godwin? . . . This is all so late. . . . Must I be only a defeated woman-thing? After all? — A woman-voice crying in the wilderness? — Dead . . . of her woman-child? —

(Leans back suddenly, exhausted.)

SYMES

(rising, and speaking strongly to her)

You? Oh, never dream such words. This is the edge of a cloud. And I see you as a soul in the vanguard of all souls that strive after light and liberty. We have not reached them yet; — nor in poor France; nor in the New World over there, be sure! But you, you lead me now; can you not feel it? You have opened a way before me, more than I ever dreamed one soul could show another, *you*, solitary woman; a way, and a strength. — I may tell you now, in forthright

words. I saw you first with man's eyes; man's love, it may be. But I did not understand that love; I had no words to tell it. I desired to shelter you; whose Beauty sheltered me. — I lost you; and I followed, and could not turn away. And losing you, I followed that wistful flame in your eyes that followed Something. — I lost you in human grief when the waves went over you. I could hardly bear it that my pioneer was spent and torn in briary ways of hardship. Still she went on before me, unconquerable, through griefs men cannot know, all herself, and only herself, and her sacrifices. She led me out of myself . . . out of my small contents . . . out of my low dwelling.

MARY

A pioneer?

SYMES

A torch; forever. . . . Yes, we do learn more than we would; we have more than we ask. We knock, and dare not enter. Because there opens before us —

MARY

Life, — forever going on; and we — so little and

so young! . . . You comfort me. . . . These were good human words, such as I have dreamed there should be, between men and women, and all toil-worn creatures breaking their bread together. . . . You must go?

SYMES

I bless your tender mercy. — They would be vexed indeed, I fear, if they knew.

MARY

(*meekly*)

Yes.

(*A streak of sunlight reaches, lower and farther, from the casement window. SYMES sees it, and in response to her unuttered wish, goes up and opens the window to let in more.*)

SYMES

But again, when you are stronger.

MARY

Go, dear friend. . . . You have given me new heart.

SYMES

I?

MARY

For the high adventure. — Heart to journey through . . . alone.

(SYMES, coming down towards her, folds back the screen so that the light may reach her as she wishes, bringing into view, nearly, a small stand with the hour-glass upon it. Neither observes it. She reaches out her hand to him; and with an effort to conceal his emotion, he comes close and bends his forehead upon it for a moment; then lays it back upon the other.)

SYMES

Beautiful hand, stay by the other, close; till she be strong. (*He turns to the door, right.*)

MARY

They bless you, both. — (*Exit SYMES.*)
Ah, sunset! —

(*Turning, restlessly, she sees the hour-glass. — She regards it for a moment and then takes it in her hands and looks at it stoically. — Below, in the street, there is the sound of fiddle and harp, suddenly, in preliminary strain, as of the street-singers in*

PORTRAIT OF MRS. W. 763

*Act II. — She looks up and listens. A mel-
low voice sings:*

*'Drink to me only with thine eyes
And I will pledge with mine. . . .
Or leave a kiss within the cup,
And I'll not ask for wine.'*

*She struggles to sit up; and reaches the hour-
glass back upon the stand; so that the sand
trickles; — and as the song goes on, she
stretches out her hands, both, into the long
sun-ray that touches her, just before it goes
out.*

*'The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine:
But might I of Love's nectar sip,
I would not change for thine.'*

*The song stops and the players move on.
The bedroom door opens and UPPIE re-
enters hastily, agitated.)*

UPPIE

*(drawing near to look closely at her, sees her lying
back with closed eyes)*

Ah! . . . Say you're not worse, dearie! Say

you're not worse! I must have gone asleep. . . . I should n't have let you have your own way. But . . . no; it was not wrong. It was not wrong. — Boy! (Tom *appears in the doorway.*) Quick, to her bed. . . . Before Mr. Godwin comes. . . . He's very long away.

MARY

(*opening her eyes and repeating*)

He is . . . very long . . . away.

(*The two fold her robe about her, lift her tenderly from the couch, and carry her into the bedroom. A second later, her voice is heard murmuring deliriously — 'Cold — cold — cold' . . .*

Enter GODWIN from the corridor, freshened with outer air. He enters, throws off his coat, and looks about, responding suddenly to some change in the room.)

GODWIN

Mary! — They moved you . . . (*Agitated.*) Why are there no candles? Uppie, Uppie! —

(UPPIE *reënters with a candle from which she lights two or three. GODWIN watches her, with a childlike awe; he sees the cushions,*

the couch, the flowers, and unconsciously follows UPPIE as she lights, last of all, a tall candle on the stand beside the hour-glass. — He points to it, and says in a high, excited voice —)

Who turned the glass? Who turned the glass?
(*As UPPIE stands austere-ly silent and brushes away the tears from her eyes, he makes a gesture of penitence, standing by the couch.*) Oh, I . . . I am foolish. . . . Uppie . . . (*timidly.*) (UPPIE turns.) Uppie . . . Elizabeth. Tell me, — before I see her. What do you truly think of your mistress? . . . How is she, Uppie? What do you think?

UPPIE

(*controlling her grief*)

She's going fast, Sir . . . She's going . . .

GODWIN

(*with a cry between rage and anguish*)

Ah, — no, no! —

(*He clenches the hour-glass at arm's length for an instant, regarding it with superstitious hatred — dashes it violently on the ground; and covers his face with his two hands.*)

UPPIE

(straightening her apron like a rustic Fate, looks at him with woe and pity, as he stands. Then she speaks with inflexible resignation)

That can do no help, Sir. We can't measure things like that; and we can't destroy them if we would. Not Time, nor Life, nor Death. — They go on, Sir.

CURTAIN

Epilogue

A late July afternoon, 1814.

Scene: MR. WILLIAM GODWIN'S Study, in Skinner Street. — It is a large room, subdued in color, with a softened shabbiness; and books everywhere. At back, centre, a fireplace and mantel. Over this, the portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft. To right and left of the fireplace, doors; the one to the right opening on an outer corridor. Down, to the left, an inner door. — Windows to the left, with curtains half-drawn, letting in a low summer light. Down, right, the same long couch seen in Act III. Left, near the windows, a large table strewn with papers, and a scrap-basket full of them to overflowing; some on the floor.

There is a knock at the outer door; then a pause.

The door opens slowly.

Enter MARY GODWIN, with resolute dignity, followed by SHELLEY, whose air is similarly firm, but calmer. He is a tall, radiant looking

768 P O R T R A I T O F M R S . W .

youth, with roughish, upstanding hair and luminous eyes. His hat is in his hands, and he looks before him clearly into the room, over MARY's head.

MARY *is a very fair girl of sixteen; pale and tense at present, and wholly unconscious of her youth. They enter, one at a time, and close the door.*

SHELLEY

(decisively)

He is not in the house.

MARY

He is never in the house for me, these late days. I was foolish to be frightened. . . . But if you had seen him yesterday . . .

SHELLEY

Mary, I saw him just three days ago. . . . This means the end. For us, the Beginning. Take it as an answer, if you still need any beyond what your own heart tells you. (*Ardently.*) I do not. (*She looks up at him with worship.*) You have tried to write him.

MARY

To write him! . . . (*She comes down towards the*

scrap-basket and points to the strewings there, looking closely.) Percy! . . . He will not read a word.

SHELLEY

It is a vision of parental tyranny at its worst. He will no longer speak with me. And what more have we to ask? . . . We love each other. That is our answer to the rest of Life! Your father is no longer capable of living up to his own teachings, my Life. — You see that. (*She nods assent.*) His close, personal point of view has blinded him to the doctrines he was born to teach . . . and we were born to uphold! But we two together, we will be true to them till he shall return to himself. Don't be so grieved, my dearest one. In time, he will come to know us, as we know ourselves.

MARY

Oh, if I could hope that!

SHELLEY

Believe it, Darling. Must I remind you of your own father's teachings? . . . Yes, . . . (*resolutely*) for I am still his faithful disciple, though

he be absent from himself. It is unthinkable to-day, he is the same man who wrote, without blenching, '*Marriage is law, and the worst of all laws*'. . . he who could fail so utterly to understand me when I told him our resolve. . . . But think lovingly of him; and I will try to do so, Mary. He has taught us better than he knows. I'll go now, and leave you these last few hours. — Be firm, my Soul. — I trust you. (*She looks at him glowingly.*) . . . Give him all your thoughts, this little while. Write him, if you will, that I, — I love him too. He is your Father! For to-day. — But to-morrow, Mary!

MARY

To-morrow!

SHELLEY

Will be all . . . all ours! . . . We have a world to save. — And you . . . have me.

(*Exit, by the outer door. They exchange one look, of breathless expectancy.*

Once alone, MARY slips off her wide hat with sudden relief. — While she does so, the upper left-hand door opens, to admit UPPIE; an older UPPIE, a trifle formal in her dress,

and very melancholy. MARY throws her hat on the couch; following it, carefully, with her armful of books, folding some green leaves in their pages. She runs her fingers over her hair with a deep sigh; and turns to catch sight of UPPIE's watchful silence. — Her start of surprise shows her overwrought state of mind and body.)

MARY

Uppie! . . . Why did n't you speak?

UPPIE

(coming down, her eyes still mournfully fixed on MARY)

Miss Mary . . . You're wearied out.

MARY

(about to deny it, but giving in to UPPIE's gentleness)

Oh . . . Yes, you are right. I think I must be. But it's stifling here. How can you keep the room so dark this day?

UPPIE

'T is the worst day of July that's been down on

London these twenty years, the paper'll be saying; and cooler with the curtains drawn. . . . You look fair dizzied with it, Miss Mary. I wonder . . . I really do . . . at you going off such a length . . . *to walk . . . (searchingly).*

MARY

(quickly)

'T was only to St. Pancras . . . you know why; the churchyard is full of shade.

(She looks up at her mother's portrait. UPPIE'S gaze follows hers. She takes a step nearer to the girl's small drawn-up figure, and her voice softens further. — She smoothes a frill of MARY'S fichu with the speechless familiarity of devotion and says, doggedly:)

UPPIE

In the simmering heat! . . . You look all of a fever; . . . a slow fever *(solemnly)* and I suppose it will be that same Mr. Shelley kept you there . . . talking hour on hour. *(Half to herself, sincerely.)* 'Save and deliver me out of the hand of strange children, whose mouth talketh vanity; — and their right hand —'

(MARY with sudden playfulness puts her

hand over UPPIE'S mouth; then kisses her forehead.)

MARY

(as if confidence were a forbidden delight)

Mr. Shelley . . . loves the Sun!

UPPIE

(drily)

Perhaps that's what ails him . . . I've heard of such: people losing their wits with staying too much in it: . . . and going round without a hat, too. (MARY *laughs.*) He's no right, nor any man, to keep young heads a-simmering 'longside of him such an afternoon, in or out of *any* churchyard.

(Turns and peers inquiringly at the portrait as if for approval.)

MARY

Oh, Uppie, . . . Mr. Shelley is a genius; a very great man. —

UPPIE

(with sudden ire)

A great man! Him, a long-legged boy, twenty years old! —

MARY

(with dignity)

Twenty-two years old. . . . And he has had terrible, bitter experience *(with awe and pity)* in that short life.

UPPIE

(searchingly)

His wife, you mean.

MARY

(nodding candidly)

We must not speak of it, Uppie.

UPPIE

Men don't have to live long for such bitter experiences; — nor to leave 'em all behind.

MARY

(with sudden fire)

Oh, Uppie! Uppie! . . . Is it not enough that my father should so disown his own teachings, his own Disciple . . . for Mr. Shelley is one . . . that was how we met him! — That he should suddenly turn so intractably cold-hearted; deaf to reason; blind to all the . . . the great principles we were *reared* upon! . . . But . . .

(UPPIE softens and folds her arms around the

girl; looking over her nestling head, with a vain appeal to the portrait.)

U P P I E

Your cheeks are burning. You are n't yourself, . . . my lamb. I'll make you some tea. (MARY *shakes her head.*) No? — Rest you here, then. . . . I wish Miss Fanny were home. — Your father's out.

M A R Y

(suddenly)

Of course he's out! . . . How he does behave lately, Uppie. Like a . . . like a cross lost child. Whatever I do . . . or try to say. But it's I that am the lost child, Uppie. Oh, you can see. It's too bad for you to wait on me: you, here for just that little city visit. You should be resting. —
(They come down, together.)

U P P I E

It's sore-hearted I am to be going home and leave you here. But, so as I value God's word, my lamb, I never could please *(in a loud whisper)* . . . the present Mrs. Godwin.

M A R Y

Nor can I. — You see that.

UPPIE

(comfortingly)

I see that. . . . But look back now . . . to your own mother, your own mother, as Mr. Opie, God rest his soul! — painted her.

MARY

Oh, I've been looking and listening, Uppie. . . . Forgive me, I can't talk now. My head aches so.

UPPIE

Rest you here, *(pointing to the couch)* — just here where I've seen herself, many's the time.

(As she goes to draw the curtains, MARY touches the cushions with a childish affection, and takes her place on the couch.)

MARY

(with a burst of longing)

Oh, you talk to me about her, Uppie. Just about her . . . I'm so *mothersick*. — Yes, tell me the very end, again.

UPPIE

(firmly lifting MARY's two little feet upon the sofa, and sitting beside her, and smoothing her forehead)

And I, telling you more than ever I should! . . .

Well, so, my lamb. — (God be our help.) We had taken you and your cradle out of the room; and we left her to sleep a bit, quite alone. For there was little care on most of us, those few small hours. . . . (*She looks at MARY, and goes on in a lower voice, as she strokes her hand regularly.*) . . . Little care, for those few hours. Sixteen years ago; only Sixteen. . . . Ah, the fine little child you were. . . . But just as your father came in again, I heard her say those words we were in dread of. . . . ‘Cold . . . cold,’ and that was the beginning of the end. . . . Then, ‘Up-pie,’ he says to me . . . the poor man. . . . (*She looks closely at MARY’s face. MARY is asleep.*) Poor lamb! —

(*She softly withdraws to the window, draws the curtains close to darken the room; and goes out, with a backward look.*)

A last thread of sunlight touches the portrait of MARY over the fireplace; crosses the canvas and moves down the dark room towards her sleeping Daughter. The portrait is left dim.

Behind the couch the faint ray of light defines the Appearance,—shining with grace and a beauty of strange youth,

younger than the portrait — of Mary Wollstonecraft, smiling upon her child. — She wears the dress that OPIE has painted; and the same soft binding on her hair. The Daughter, in her sleep, sits up, slowly and with wide-open eyes, to look at her; in wonder, incredulity, quick comfort. Their faces light with unspeakable tenderness. When MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT speaks, it is in a voice of youth without a cloud; tranquil to ecstasy.)

DAUGHTER

Mother! . . . Mother! . . . (MARY'S look replies with radiance.) Mother! . . . Where were you? Why did you never answer?

MARY

Do you hear me at last . . . my own?

DAUGHTER

All these days that I have been *praying* to you, . . . Mother, where were you?

MARY

You did not hear me, Child.

DAUGHTER

Not hear you! . . . Beside your grave, Mother.
My cheek upon your grave!

MARY

I cannot remember my grave, dear one. I am
not there, ever.

DAUGHTER

I knew . . . you could not answer. . . . But, oh!
I prayed to *you* . . . to know . . . the right.

MARY

We are not all-wise, my darling. We grow, and
grow. We are all so young in this world; much
younger than we ever dreamed ourselves. All
living things grow on: in life and youth.

DAUGHTER

And . . . Love . . . lasts forever?

MARY

Love lasts forever.

DAUGHTER

(like a rapturous child)

I was sure! . . . But . . . Mother . . .

MARY

Love changes; as we change.

DAUGHTER

(with dread in her voice)

Love changes?

MARY

As we change; and grow. — Is my love for you
... changed?

DAUGHTER

(comforted)

No! No!

MARY

(playfully)

Or yours, for me?

DAUGHTER

It grows, — it grows!

MARY

I bathe in it; I shine with it; we shine upon each other. It is our one clear speech and understanding. — The one all souls would have. . . . You are troubled yet, my Darling?

DAUGHTER

Am I? . . . Yes, yes. Surely you know all? . . .
It is . . . Shelley, Mother.

MARY

Who is Shelley?

DAUGHTER

Mother, not know him! . . . How can that be?
Dearest, he worships you.

MARY

So close, you say? . . . (*serenely*) And I see only
you. . . . It is some one you love.

DAUGHTER

(*simply*)

Yes. . . . And yet . . . How can Love . . . change?

MARY

Love may be lost. . . .

DAUGHTER

(*with a shade of dismay*)

Lost? . . .

MARY

Lost . . . in a deeper Love. And the way may

lead through bitter grief in that world; only, we cannot feel the bitterness again, once we are grown. Love fills us with new understanding. Love cannot be all contained in one small human heart. Sometimes it breaks that heart, — to overflow.

DAUGHTER

Oh, Mother, is that the answer?

MARY

We are the answer; we ourselves; and Life in us, that grows.

DAUGHTER

I am strong again; I am strong! . . . Only one word. —

MARY

(fading a little)

— And Joy is never lost; save in a greater joy. —

DAUGHTER

Oh, what a word I have to tell them now! —
Would they believe it?

MARY

(smiling)

Dream can grow small again. You will forget.

DAUGHTER

No, I will be your torch-bearer! — It is the world forgets. . . . It even forgets you, Mother. Do you know? Do you care?

MARY

(happily; and brightening)

I, too, was blindfold once, blindfold with time!

DAUGHTER

(reaching out her arms)

Breathe on me! Fold me in! — To think I sprang from you!

MARY

Beloved . . . You are happy now?

DAUGHTER

So happy!

MARY

(she seems to be going, with a constant backward look)

And be strong. —

DAUGHTER

One question . . . Mother . . . wait! . . . I feel it beating. . . .

MARY

We shall be young together, you and I.

(A door outside bangs heavily. The light and the vision are gone in darkness for a moment. . . . When the room emerges into its twilight, MARY is seen lying asleep as at first. — She opens her eyes, sits up bewildered, and puts the hair back from her forehead. She looks refreshed; but mindless of the dream.

*Reënter UPPIE, cautiously. She comes down.
— MARY rises.)*

UPPIE

You'd better run upstairs and freshen yourself, Miss Mary. — Your father's back, earlier . . .

MARY

Yes. *(Gathers up her hat and the books beside her.)*
. . . You were right, dear. I've been asleep, I think. I feel much cheerier; much stronger. And one thing, I promise you. Father shall read the next letter I write him, Uppie: yes, even if he hunts up the pieces, to put them together again!

(Points across at the scrap-basket, and goes

towards the door, down, left. — UPPIE looks vengefully at the scrap-basket. — MARY stopping suddenly for a backward look, sets down her belongings on the nearest table; and running like a child to UPPIE, throws her arms around her and clings to her for an instant; then hurriedly catches up her armful again. She goes out by the door, down, left, just as WILLIAM GODWIN enters, from the street, hat in hand. — He is now a man of middle-age, distinguished-looking, but of coldish mien; his hair is fully gray.

He walks in with an air of severe abstraction; comes down to the table by the window, and mail in hand, opens the letters, as if his mind were elsewhere. Most of them he tears through, once or twice, and adds contemptuously to the débris in the waste-basket, giving scant attention to UPPIE when she speaks with him.

UPPIE observes him with cold heaviness of manner, standing immovably for a moment. Then she speaks.)

UPPIE

If I may make so bold, Mr. Godwin . . . I was

wishing to tell you, Sir . . . without seeming to interfere. In clearing up Miss Mary's writing-table . . . in her room, Sir, this noon . . .

(GODWIN's *attention is caught, in spite of his efforts to discard her.*)

GODWIN

(*with a note of exasperation*)

Yes, Elizabeth?

UPPIE

I never presume, Sir . . .

GODWIN

Certainly not. What did you . . . what was . . .

UPPIE

Oh, very gratifying to you, Sir, I'm sure, — I could n't help noticing. . . . There was such a heap of papers torn in two, Sir, and I had to take them up; — they were all beginnings to yourself, Sir. (GODWIN *turns to stone with stubborn disapproval.*) 'My dear Father,' and . . . and 'Dearest Father' . . . and then, that was all, Sir, . . . (*coaxingly*) 'Father dearest.' . . .

GODWIN

Not communicating any striking fact, Elizabeth, save to intricate observation.

UPPIE

I could n't help thinking, Sir, although I never do . . . that for a young lady to sit up all night . . . beginning letters to her own father . . . and him in his own house, along with his own daughter; it might be something was on her mind, Sir. . . . It will hardly be for practice, Sir. Miss Mary's handwriting was always —

(GODWIN utters an inarticulate expression of impatience, and resumes his destruction of the mail.)

GODWIN

Whatever it is about, Elizabeth, I shall unquestionably learn in due time. (*As she lingers in evident concern*) However, I thank you. I am glad to hear it. Miss Mary has at times seemed to me unduly impulsive. This indicates that she is now moved to subject her impulses to a rational examination by communicating them to paper . . . for my counsel. . . . I thank you, Elizabeth. . . . (*Spending his wrath on a few*

more pamphlets, he adds between his teeth) I think I have told you several times, you need not save for me any of these . . . Tracts. My mail is cumbersome enough.

UPPIE

Tracts, Sir?

GODWIN

Sermons, pamphlets, tracts. (*Holding up a paper and reading its title with biting scorn.*) 'LOVE DIVINE: Our Fountain of Youth.' . . . Symes!

UPPIE

(*bewildered*)

Symes? . . . (*coming forward*) Symes! Let me look, Sir.

GODWIN

(*irritably*)

Symes. — The name is nothing. Look at the title. — 'LOVE DIVINE: . . . Our Fountain of Youth!' — (*Tears it up.—As she moves heavily away, he looks after her with some compunction.*) I shall be going out again, presently, Uppie. . . . If you will be good enough to clear away these waste papers then, I . . . thank you, Uppie.

(*She goes out.*)

GODWIN, *following her steps, pauses before*

the portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft, raising his hands, clinched with intense feeling, for a moment, towards her averted gaze. —

GODWIN

Ah, . . . Mary! . . . If you could only tell me. If you were only . . . Anywhere. If I could only be the fool my heart is. — If I might only come to that mirage, — and we be young, together!

*(He picks up his hat again and goes out.
Reënter UPPIE. She comes down mechanically towards the scrap-basket, murmuring.)*

UPPIE

‘Waste-papers,’ says he. . . . And ‘waste men,’ say I.

(She stoops to pick up from the floor various strewings from GODWIN’S hasty hand, shaking her head, and quoting solemnly,

‘And some . . . fell by the wayside.’

Exit UPPIE carrying the scrap-basket, heavily.

Reënter softly, by the lower door, MARY. Her hat and mantle are hanging on her arm. She holds against her bosom a letter, and

hovers a moment above her father's table with it; then changes her mind.

Turning towards her Mother's portrait, she goes up slowly, closer and closer to it, clasping the letter. She lifts her face wistfully an instant; then she pushes before the fireplace a low ottoman, and mounts it. She spreads her arms wide, to the sides of the frame, lays her cheek against the canvas, and kisses it. — Then she steps down, looking back.)

MARY

Darling, . . . Good-bye.

CURTAIN

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